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ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA
EDITED BY DARYLL FORDE

WESTERN AFRICA

PART X

PEOPLES OF THE NIGER-BENUE CONFLUENCE

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WESTERN AFRICA

ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA
EDITED BY DARYLL FORDE

PART X

PEOPLES OF THE NIGER-BENUE CONFLUENCE

THE NUPE by DARYLL FORDE
THE IGBIRA by PAULA BROWN
THE IGALA by ROBERT G. ARMSTRONG
THE IDOMA-SPEAKING PEOPLES by ROBERT G. ARMSTRONG

LONDON
INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN INSTITUTE
1955

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DOD

This study is one section of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa which the International African Institute is preparing with the aid of a grant made by the Secretary of State under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, on the recommendation of the Colonial Social Science Research Council.

[p. 10]

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FOREWORD

THE International African Institute has, since 1945, been engaged on the preparation and publication of an Ethnographic Survey of Africa, the purpose of which is to present in a brief and readily comprehensible form a summary of available information concerning the different peoples of Africa with respect to location, natural environment, economy and crafts, social structure, political organization, religious beliefs and cults. While published material has provided the main basis for the Survey, a large number of unpublished documents—reports and records in government files and in the archives of missionary societies, as well as field notes and special communications by anthropologists and others—have been generously made available and these have been supplemented by personal correspondence and consultation. The Survey is being published in a number of separate volumes, each of which is concerned with one people or a group of related peoples, and contains a comprehensive bibliography and a specially drawn map.

A committee of the Institute, to determine the scope of the Survey, was set up under the Chairmanship of Professor Radcliffe-Brown, and the Director of the Institute has undertaken the editing and organization. The generous collaboration of a number of research institutions and administrative officers in Europe and in the African territories was secured, as well as the services of senior anthropologists who have been good enough to supervise and amplify the drafts.

The work of the Survey was initiated with the aid of a grant from the British Colonial Development and Welfare Funds, on the recommendation of the Social Science Research Council, to be applied mainly though not exclusively to work relating to British territories. A further grant from the Sudan Government has assisted in the preparation and publication of sections dealing with that territory.

The Ministère de la France d'Outre-Mer and the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire were good enough to express their interest in the project and through their good offices grants have been received from the Governments of French West Africa and the French Cameroons for the preparation and publication of sections relating to those areas. These sections have been prepared by French ethnologists with the support and advice of Professor M. Griaule of the Sorbonne and Professor Th. Monod, Director of I.F.A.N.

The collaboration of the Belgian authorities in this project was first secured by the good offices of the late Professor de Jonghe, who enlisted the interest of the Commission d'Ethnologie of the Academie Royale des Sciences Coloniales. The collaboration of the Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale has also been readily accorded. Work relating to Belgian territories is being carried out under the direction of Professor Olbrechts at the Centre du Documentation of the Musée Royal du Congo Belge, Tervuren, where Mlle. Boone and members of her staff are engaged on the assembly and classification of the vast mass of material relating to African peoples in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. They work in close collaboration with ethnologists in the field to whom draft manuscripts are submitted for checking.

The International African Institute desires to express its grateful thanks to those official bodies whose generous financial assistance has made the carrying out of this project possible and to the many scholars, directors of research organizations, administrative officers, missionaries, and others who have collaborated in the work and, by granting facilities to our research workers and by correcting and supervising their manuscripts, have contributed so largely to whatever merit the various sections may possess.

Since the unequal value and unsystematic nature of existing material was one of the reasons for undertaking the Survey, it is obvious that these studies cannot

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FOREWORD

claim to be complete or definitive; it is hoped, however, that they will present a clear account of our existing knowledge and indicate where information is lacking and further research is needed.

We are grateful for help given in the preparation of the present volume by Professor S. F. Nadel, who read the first draft of the Nupe section. Thanks are also due to Miss Freda Hands and Miss Barbara Pym for editorial assistance in the preparation of all the sections.

DARYLL FORDE,
Director,
International African Institute.

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INTRODUCTION

The confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers has for long been a focal area of migrations, commerce, and conquest, which have set up cultural cross currents of many kinds. The Igala, the Jukun, and the Fulani have at various times conquered large parts of the region and these wars have left deep impressions on the institutions of the peoples.

The area as a whole is fairly open savannah or "orchard bush," but it is fly-infested and cattle cannot be reared successfully. The agriculture, which dominates the economy, includes the cultivation of crops, such as guinea-corn and yams, characteristic of Northern and Southern Nigeria respectively, hence the term "Middle Belt" which is frequently applied to the Niger-Benue region. The Nupe country is one of the northernmost areas in which the oil-palm and kola nut are found; the Niger watershed in Igala and the southern fringe of districts in Idoma also lie within the "palm belt." Settlement is fairly continuous over the area as a whole and there is considerable intermixture of ethnic groups. Population is moderately dense—between 30 and 60 persons per square mile over wide areas—though it is considerably sparser north of the Benue and in some Nupe districts west of the Kaduna River.

Continuous European contact with the Niger-Benue region began with Lander's descent of the Niger in 1830. In 1832–33 the Laird and Oldfield expedition succeeded in getting some distance up the Benue and visited the whole river front of the Igbira and Igala countries. They found the country north of the Benue much disturbed by Fulani raids. The markets around the confluence were major centres of the slave trade[1] and in 1855 Crowther heard Igala, Igbira, Nupe, Kakanda, Hausa, Yoruba, Idoma, Jukun, and Ibo being spoken at the Igbede market at the confluence.[2]

The tribes of the Niger-Benue confluence speak Kwa languages, while to the east the region borders directly on a solid block of tribes speaking so-called "Semi-Bantu" languages.[3] But there has been great terminological confusion, with reference to both languages and ethnic groups, especially concerning the large body of Idoma-speaking peoples lying between Igala and Tiv country, where the name Akpoto or Okpoto was used in various 19th-century accounts to include all the region from the confluence to the Tiv border. Whatever the original situation may have been, however, the only group in the area which today calls itself and its language Akpoto is the peoples of the central and western Idoma-speaking districts. The situation is further confused by the fact that there is a district of Igala called Akpoto, south of Ankpa. This district borders on Idoma, and the people on both sides of the border are largely bilingual. As will be seen from the section on the Idoma, many of the "languages" of this region which have hitherto received separate treatment in the literature can now be shown to be closely related dialects of Idoma. Although north of the Benue the situation appears simpler, this may well be due to continuing ignorance of the ethnography and linguistics of the area.

Politically the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence exhibit widely differing systems, ranging from the highly organized state of the Nupe with a ruling dynasty of Fulani descent, and the Igbira and Igala chiefdoms with their "divine kings," to the fragmentary statelets of the Idoma-speaking peoples and the small autonomous "clans" of the Egede. The Nupe are the only people to have been Islamized to any considerable extent.

In describing these very diverse peoples, who have nevertheless been in contact over long periods, it has been found most convenient to deal first with the Nupe

[1] Clapperton and Lander, 1829, p. 297.
[2] Crowther, 1855, p. 167.
[3] See Crowther, 1855, p. 65, and below, pp. 78–9, 90–3.

128 of Niger and Ilorin Provinces, on whom there is a considerable literature. An account is next given of the Igbira and the Igala of Kabba Province; this is necessarily uneven and provisional in view of the very limited sources. The account of the Idoma-speaking peoples of Benue Province is based mainly on Dr. Armstrong's field investigations and his study of unpublished local records. The peoples have been grouped by him as follows: first the Idoma " Proper " of Idoma Division, with their outliers the Iyala and Nkum and the so-called Arago of Doma and Keana, and secondly other groups speaking languages closely related to Idoma, namely, the Afu of Nassarawa, and the Egede, Akweya-Yachi and Utonkon-Effium of Idoma and Ogoja Divisions.

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THE NUPE

[p. 7N]

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Nupe—Note on Orthography

The symbols employed by Nadel (1942) have generally been followed in this section: ŋ = nasalization of preceding vowel; ɬ = s in lesion; ' indicates the high tone and usually the stressed syllable in a word.

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THE NUPE

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

Introduction

105 The Nupe, speaking a number of related dialects, number about 360,000, and consist of the inhabitants of Bida Emirate, Niger Province, together with several politically separate sections. They do not form a territorially united group and, although every Nupe should extend hospitality to his fellow-tribesmen, they are not characterized by close internal cohesion. There is considerable variety of custom among the various "sub-tribes." Outstanding common features are: the cycle of myths of the culture-hero Tsoede, the observation of the *gunna* ritual, belief in the supreme sky-god Soko, and the general structure of political ranks, age-sets, kinship system, and marriage rules.[1]

Nomenclature

101 The Nupe call themselves *Nupeciłi* or *Nupenciłi* (sing. *Nupeci* or *Nupenci*), their language *Nupe* or *Ezi Nupe*, and their country *Kin Nupe* ("the land of Nupe"). But Nupe in Zugurma and, generally speaking, north of the Kaduna River, also call themselves *Agabi*.[2] They are known by neighbouring tribes by the following names:[3]

By the Hausa: *Ba Nupe* or *Nufawa* (sing. *Nufe*).
" " Gbari of Kuta: *Abawa* (sing. *Bawa*).[4]
" " Gbari of Paiko and Birnin Gwari: *Ampeyi* or *Nife*.
" " Akanda (Yoruba): *Asupecwayi*.
" " Yoruba, Kambali, and Fon: *Takpa* or *Tapa* (*Tappah*).
" " Ijumu (Yoruba) and Igbira: *Asupe*.
" " Ebe (Nupe sub-tribe): *Asuperi*.
" " Lopawa: *Duma*.

Location

131 The Nupe live in the low basin formed by the valleys of the Niger and Kaduna Rivers, between 9° 30′ and 8° 30′ north, in an area roughly 7,000 square miles in extent. Their northern boundary runs from Share (Tsaragi) to the Niger south of Baro; the western boundary is the Niger from Leaba to Jebba and south to Share; the eastern boundary is the line of the foothills east of Lapai and Gidi. Small sections of the Nupe are also scattered through Nigeria, especially in villages and towns on the Niger. The largest of these groups is that of the Basa or Basa Nge, in the north-west of Igala Division of Kabba Province opposite Lokoja.

131 The Nupe form the great majority of the population in the Bida and Agaie 167 Emirates of Niger Province, and in the Pategi-Lafiagi Emirate of Ilorin Province. There are also Nupe in the north-east of Ilorin and in the south of Borgu Emirate. They form a compact minority of the population in other chieftainships and political districts under the authority of Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbira chiefs, as follows: around Zugurma in the Kontagora Division of Niger Province, under the Hausa Emir of Kontagora; in Shona and Share Districts of Ilorin Province, under the

[1] Nadel, 1942, pp. 13–26; 1935a, pp. 278–9; Meek, 1925, Vol. I, p. 24. Thanks to the publications of Professor S. F. Nadel, based on intensive fieldwork in Bida Emirate and elsewhere in the thirties, it is possible to treat many aspects of Nupe culture and social organization more systematically and also more briefly than is the case for most of the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence.
[2] Mathews, 1936.
[3] Nadel, 1942, p. 12; Temple, 1919, p. 283 and index.
[4] The Ebe sub-tribe is also called Abewa by Hausa speakers.

[pp 1-16 Non-existent]

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131 167 Fulani-Yoruba Emir of Ilorin; in Eggan District, Koton Karifi Division, Kabba Province, under the *Ata* of Igbira.[5]

Neighbouring Tribes

101 Neighbours of the Nupe to the west are Fulani and Ilorin Yoruba; to the east and north-east, Gbari, Basa, and Igbira; to the north, Kamberi, Kamuku, and Hausa; to the south, Yoruba (Ilorin, Yagba, Bunu, and Aworo); to the north-west, Bussawa and Borgawa.

Nupe Sub-tribes[6]

619 634 [167] Nupe sub-tribes are both territorial and cultural entities, each speaking its own dialect and often united by a network of kinship ties and a belief in common descent. But a great deal of migration has taken and still takes place between one sub-tribe and another. Some other peoples, such as the Kakanda, are in the process of being assimilated as Nupe sub-tribes.

Beni (Bini): one of the "original" Nupe sub-tribes which, together with Kyedye and Bataci, forms the nucleus of the Nupe kingdom. Traditionally Beni became a political unit when the 12 towns of the Beni confederacy recognized the supremacy of one of their number and gave allegiance and tribute to its chief; they were bound to fight together and support each other in times of war. The 12 towns share common insignia, a common mythology, and a specialized form of the *gunnu* cult. To-day the Beni are concentrated mainly in and around Bida, Kutigi, and Lemu, but there are a few living near the confluence of the Niger and Kaduna Rivers. They have a high reputation as farmers and craftsmen.

Bataci (Batachi, Bataciɨi): also an "original" sub-tribe, coming under the local overlordship of the Kyedye. They are considered to be the original inhabitants of the riverain area and live on the pools and backwaters of the lower reaches of the Niger.

Kyedye (Kede): a term often used for all canoe- and fishermen on the river, referring specifically to a group known as *Eyapaciɨi* ("canoe-men"). They in turn refer to all other groups of Nupe collectively as *Laticiɨi* ("farmers"), and call the non-Kyedye sub-tribes *Kintsoɨi* ("owners of the land," i.e., original inhabitants). The Kyedye had established themselves on the Kaduna River and on Jebba Island about 40 years ago. The emergence of this sub-tribe consisted in the growth of a colonizing and dominating group, expanding from Muregi at the confluence of the Niger and Kaduna,[7] and although they form a minority in the area they have established themselves as local rulers over the Bataci.

The Kyedye do not intermarry with Bataci and other sub-tribes but, on the contrary, stress a sharp tribal and cultural division. They are the only purely riverain Nupe sub-tribe and are said to "rule the water." They are to be found mainly on the left bank of the Niger and on the Kaduna River, in the Bida, Agaie, Lapai, and Kontagora Emirates of Niger Province. Others are on the right bank of the Niger in the Ilorin, Lafiagi, and Pategi Emirates of Ilorin Province, and in the Koton Karifi Division of Kabba Province. There are 10 main villages, Muregi being the only purely Kyedye settlement; all the others are built on sites of "native" villages. Another small group lives at Onitsha as canoe builders, and there is a large and prosperous colony at Lokoja.

They are divided into two sections, of which one, Kyedye Tifin or Gbéde,[8] a semi-riverain group upstream from Jebba Island, is subject to the other, Kyedye Tako,[9] who live downstream.

[5] Nadel, 1942, p. 13; 1937b, p. 434.
[6] Nadel, 1942, pp. 19–26; 1935a, pp. 258–9, 237, 275; 1940a, pp. 164–71.
[7] According to Nadel, this colonization is still going on.
[8] The main Kyedye Tifin villages are: Muregi, Cegu, Leaba, Shankyedye, Yankyedye, Sambo, Sonka, Egwa, Basumagi, Buka, Bele.
[9] The main Kyedye Tako villages are: Kpakefu, Ogudu, Ketsogi, Lepkata, Endorigi, Ela, Dita, Gbaradosi, Dokomba, Kpatagba, Kacha Wunengi, Gungi, Etsumutam, Gidi.

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619 634 *Nupe "Zam":* a group in Trans-Kaduna (Kutigi) believed to be the oldest section of the Nupe; calling themselves *Nupe*, they have no secondary name.

Ebagi: an "original" Nupe sub-tribe, who claim to be the descendants of a dynasty superseded by the Fulani now ruling in Ilorin Emirate.

Ebe (Abewa): an "original" sub-tribe living in Yelwa District, but, according to Mathews, they call themselves *Asu* and claim to have come from what is now Yoruba country.[10]

Gbedye (Gbedegi): on the borders of Yoruba country in Niger Province, possibly of Yoruba origin.[11]

Kupa (also, erroneously, called Gupa; Kupachi):[12] said to be of Ebe origin, having arrived at their present site on the southern bank of the Niger around Eggan and, in small numbers, in Bunu District, in about 1800. Some are also to be found in the Koton Karifi District of Kabba Province, where they form a section of the "host" population and, together with the Dibo (see below), account for some 10% of the population. There are also others in Kupa District of Koton Karifi Division. They are said to be not fully "Nupeized."

Cehpay: on the southern bank of the Niger.

Kusopá: in the Labozhi District, in thick inland forest west of the Kaduna River, where they cultivate the kola-nut plantations of Labozhi and Kudu; they are also to be found in the rich oil-palm district of Yeti. Their origin is unknown but they may be comparatively recent immigrants.

Benu: a recently formed sub-tribe of Bornu origin. They came from Kukawa at the end of the 18th century as wealthy traders and owners of cattle and horses and now predominate in Kutigi and in the neighbouring villages of the Trans-Kaduna area, where they are the economically and politically dominant group.

Dibo (also known as Žitako ("men down below") and Ganagana, a Hausa name: a recently assimilated sub-tribe. As lately as 1931 they were not fully "Nupeized" nor universally accepted as a Nupe sub-tribe.[13] They live in the southernmost part of Lafiagi and Agaie Emirates, also in the extreme north of Koton Karifi Division, on the eastern slope of the Gurara valley north of the Kunama-Okya watershed, their chief towns being Pandegi, Agyana, Ebagi, Rimbo, Kibogi, Rijaya, and Chigbwechi. There are also a few hundred in Toto and Umaisha Districts of Nasarawa Emirate. They are the predominant tribe at Ashera in Abuja Emirate.

Gwagba: a recently formed group, essentially a political section. The name is said to be deprecatory and applied to those living in and around Zugurma.[14] According to Mathews,[15] the Gwagba consist of the indigenous Ebe, Basa, and Bedegi of the district. He suggests that the name Gwagba was given to them at the time of their original conquest by the Agabi (the descendants of Tsoede, among whom are the present "royal family" of Zugurma), and that it may even be the original name of a people.

Basa-Nge: a group speaking a Nupe dialect which appears to have left the mother country about a century ago, before the Fulani conquest. They lived first

[10] Mathews, 1926.

[11] There is a Yoruba sub-tribe called Gbedde in Kabba Division of Kabba Province. One section of the Kyedye sub-tribe is also called Gbéde and also inhabits the upper stretches of the Niger.

[12] The name Kupa is said to be a corruption of Oku-Pari, meaning canoe-men of the Oku river. Kupa and Gupa are enumerated separately in the 1931 Census list of Nupe sub-tribes. Nadel names the Kupa only; Temple gives the Gupa as an offshoot of the Gbari, and the Kupa as a Nupe sub-tribe; Meek uses the name Gupa in his text and Kupa on his map; MacBride refers to those in Koton Karifi Division as Kupachi.

[13] They are, however, listed by Nadel (1942, p. 19) as one of the five "original" Nupe sub-tribes which, according to Nupe tradition, were in existence at the time of Tsoede.

[14] Nadel, 1942, p. 20.

[15] Mathews, 1926.

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on the right bank of the Niger, where Lokoja now stands, but at its founding moved over to the left bank where they are to-day, in the Basa-Nge District of Igala Division, Kabba Province. The District contains 12 riverain and nine inland units, which are mostly Basa-Nge, except for five Igala and two Igbira-Panda-Kakanda. The largest is Gbonoko, the District headquarters. The Basa-Nge are subject to the *Ata* Gala.[16]

Other groups, originally alien, but now Nupeized

Konú (Eyagi-Nupe): of Yoruba (Yagba) origin, brought to Nupe country as slaves to introduce the Yoruba arts of weaving and indigo-dyeing. They are to be found in Kutigi and the neighbouring villages.[17]

Gbari Bautá (" Gbari slaves "): in the north of Nupe territory near the Gbari border.[18]

Kakanda (Hyaba, Akanda):[19] on both banks of the Niger, north of its confluence with the Gurara River. They are of non-Nupe stock, though, according to Temple,[20] they have always lived among the Nupe. Clifford, however, says that they were formerly (? *c.* 1750) subject to Igala.[21] They have certainly undergone cultural assimilation to the Nupe and have adopted the language of the Nupe " proper." According to Westermann and Bryan, they speak either a dialect of Nupe or a closely related language.[22]

Ibɔnji: a sub-tribe mentioned in the 1931 Census, which has not been identified.

In addition to the groups mentioned above, Temple gives several names which are villages or settlements and not sub-tribes.[23] Her *Bata* (misprinted *Bafa* in the 1931 Census) and described as an agricultural people living in Lapai Emirate are not Nupe but probably Gbari. Her *Bororózhi* (nomadic cattle Fulani) only come to Nupe on seasonal migration and are not Nupeized; her *Góizhi* (settled Fulani) are the Fulani ruling class of Nupe Emirate and not a group in a tribal sense.[24]

Demographic Data

Population Estimates

1952 Census: 348,979 (Northern Region)
10,198 (Eastern and Western Regions)
1931 Census: 326,017 (Northern Provinces)
1921 Census: 349,008 (Northern Provinces)

Sub-tribes[25]

1931 Census:[26]

Beni	.. ..	48,595	Ebe	.. ..	9,100	Dibo	.. ..	18,220
Bataci	.. ..	4,627	Kupa	.. ..	15,470	Kakanda	..	4,518
Kyedye	.. ..	2,493	Benu	.. ..	7,457	Basa-Nge	..	19,163

The figures of the 1931 Census show a decrease of 23,000 or 7% on the figures for 1921. Fluctuations in the earlier numbers given for the populations have resulted

[16] Nadel, 1942, p. 12; Hopkins, 1934; Westermann and Bryan, 1952, p. 86.
[17] Nadel, op cit., p. 20.
[18] Ibid., p. 21.
[19] They should not be confused with the Akanda of Kabba and Koton Karifi Divisions of Kabba Province, who are Yoruba. The Kakanda are said by Meek (1917) to call themselves Ashe. They are known to the Hausa as Bunu (the name of a Yoruba section) and to the Igbira as Ehabe (MacBride, 1935).
[20] Temple, 1919, p. 167.
[21] Miles Clifford, " A Nigerian chiefdom," *J. roy. anthrop. inst.*, LXVI, 1936, pp. 392–436.
[22] Westermann and Bryan, loc. cit.; Nadel, op. cit., p. 15.
[23] e.g. Baedegi, Sakpe, Etsu, Pateji, Kutegi, Enagi, Gbachi, Duchu, Zumbufu.
[24] See Nadel, 1942, p. 71.
[25] Figures for all the sub-tribes listed above are not available, but the Census gives 11,944 for " Ibanji," which has not been identified.
[26] Later figures are not available.

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in part from erroneous naming of some tribes and sub-tribes as Nupe and the omission of others.[27] Marked decreases in the population are probably due to continuous small scale emigration, especially since 1930. This has been mostly in a southerly direction, to Ilorin, Lokoja, Ibadan, Oshogbo, and Lagos, i.e., to the wealthy and less heavily taxed districts of the south. In one or two cases, people of one sub-tribe have migrated into the district of another. Other significant reasons for the decrease in population may be venereal disease, abortion, and contraception, and the high infant mortality rate, though abortion is said to be practised only in the larger towns and before marriage. Infant mortality is probably the greatest single cause of the decline; many infants die of malaria.[28]

No detailed analysis has yet been made of the 1952 Census figures which, for the Northern Provinces, show an increase of about 23,000 on those of 1931.

Density of Population

The following estimates are available:

Division or District	*Persons per square mile*	*Date*
Bida	35·22	1931 Census
Agaie-Lapai	21·7	" "
Lafiagi-Pategi	30	" "
Badeggi	22	1934 (local census)
Gbangba	50	" " "
Jima-Doko	53	" " "
Kacha	60	" " "
Mokwa	12	" " "
Kutigi	13	" " "
"Trans-Kaduna" (districts west of Kaduna river)	17·6	" " "
"Cis-Kaduna" (districts east of Kaduna river)	55	" " "

The difference in density east and west of the Kaduna River may be explained by the Fulani conquest of the Nupe and the consequent emigration of the Fulani rulers and their dependents into the area east of the Kaduna.[29]

[27] Nadel (1942, pp. 9–10) gives as examples the Ganagana (Dibo) who were sometimes classed as a separate group, and the "Tapa" (Takpa) who were listed separately in the Southern Provinces until it was discovered in 1936 that Takpa was the Yoruba name for Nupe.

[28] See Brooke, *Census of Nigeria* (1931) Vol. II, p. 29; Nadel, 1942, pp. 6–8; Weatherhead, M.S.

[29] Nadel, op. cit., p. 11.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY[1]

173 The Nupe kingdom was, according to their own traditions, founded by the culture hero Tsoede or Edegi, born, according to the genealogies of the Nupe kings, early in the 15th century when the Nupe were grouped in various small chieftainships subject to the *Ata* of Igala at Idah, to whom an annual tribute of slaves, traditionally sisters' sons, had to be paid. The son of the *Ata* at this time went hunting in Nupe country, fell in love with a chief's daughter, lived with her for some time, and she became pregnant. On the death of his father the son returned to Idah to succeed but he left a chain and a ring with the woman to give to their child when it was born. This child was Tsoede, who, when he was 30 years old, was sent to Idah by his mother's brother as part of the slave tribute. He enjoyed considerable favour and success at his father's court but was eventually forced to flee because of the jealousy of his half-brothers. He travelled upstream in a bronze canoe to his own country and after many adventures established himself as king of the Nupe.

Tsoede is held to have introduced the arts of iron and brass working and the practice of human sacrifices. He died at the reputed age of 120, on one of his military expeditions to the north in which direction the Nupe kingdom was then expanding. Some of his belongings, two stirrups and a sword, are still treasured by the people of Gbagede, who are not Nupe but Kamberi.[2]

175 The first Nupe king to become a Moslem is thought to have reigned about 1770. The Nupe kingdom reached the height of its power during the periods when the *Etsu* Ma'azun was on the throne (1759–67 and 1778–95).

After the Fulani conquered the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria in the Jihad of 1805, the Nupe came under the domination of the dynasty of the Emir of Gwandu. About 1810 Mallam Dendo, a Fulani from Kebbi, who was to play an important part in its history, appeared in Nupe country as an itinerant preacher, diviner, and charm seller. He gathered around him a following of cattle Fulani, Hausa and Fulani mercenaries, merchants and priests. Taking advantage of the dissensions which broke out after *Etsu* Ma'azun's death, he established himself as a military leader. The Nupe kingdom was at this time split into two halves, with *Etsu* Jimada ruling at Gbara, the ancient capital, and *Etsu* Maija at the newly built capital of Raba on the Niger. Maija gained the support of Mallam Dendo and his followers and attacked *Etsu* Jimada, routing his forces and killing him. Eventually, however, fearing that Mallam Dendo might become a dangerous rival, he drove him from his territory across the Niger into the Yoruba country of Ilorin, and later made war against him and the ruling Fulani in Ilorin. Here Maija was defeated and driven back into the interior of Nupe country, leaving Raba open to Mallam Dendo who established himself there as ruler over the Nupe.

After his death in 1833 Dendo's second son Usman Zaki succeeded him and the old Nupe dynasty, exiled to Zugurma, abandoned all claim to the rulership. For some 10 years there were constant intrigues and quarrels among the sons of Mallam Dendo, and wars against other tribes. Usman Zaki renounced the throne in 1841 but reoccupied it in 1850. Bida then became the centre of the new kingdom in a period of comparative peace.

Between 1870 and 1890 the Niger Company established trading posts along the Niger. They, and later the Government of Nigeria, detached outlying portions of the kingdom. The Yagba and Bunu Yoruba, Gbari, Basa, and Kakanda became independent in 1900–05; the territories on the south and west banks of the Niger were taken away and given to the Emirs of Ilorin, Shonga, Lafiagi, and Pategi; the northern Nupe territories came under the Emir of Kontagora, and only Bida Division remained of the former Nupe kingdom. As a result of this fragmentation there are now groups of Nupe in areas under non-Nupe chiefs.

[1] For fuller accounts of Nupe history see Temple, 1919, pp. 324–8; Nadel, 1942, pp. 72–80; Hermon-Hodge, 1929, pp. 102–10.

[2] According to Nadel. But Mathews (MS, 1930) describes them as "pagan Nupe."

LANGUAGE

197 Nupe belongs to the Larger Unit[3] of Kwa languages of West Africa, which also includes the languages or dialects spoken by the Igbira, Igala, Idoma, and other peoples dealt with in this volume of the Ethnographic Survey.[4]

The Nupe Dialect Cluster together with those of Igbira and Gbari[5] make up the Nupe Language Group. But the Nupe are not linguistically homogeneous or exclusive. The bi-lingual Gbari of Paiko and Lapai also speak Nupe, while some of the split-off sections and colonies of Nupe have lost their native tongue. The Kakanda are said to speak a closely related language which may be a Nupe dialect. Although Gbari is a separate dialect cluster of the Nupe Language Group much of its vocabulary is identical with Nupe, which also has a close structural resemblance to both Gbari and Kakanda.

The Nupe cluster consists of five markedly different dialects: Nupe proper; Ebe, spoken by the Ebe sub-tribe; Zitako or Dibo, more closely related to Gbari; Kupa, spoken by the Kupa and Cekpaŋ sub-tribes; Basa-Nge, spoken by the Basa-Nge, a split-off section. The Gbedye sub-tribe are said to have spoken a separate dialect which is now lost. Nupe proper is spoken by the Kyedye sub-tribe and others and there are only insignificant dialectal differences between the areas where it is spoken. Bida Nupe ("higher Nupe") exhibits a fondness for Hausa words and phrases which have replaced many Nupe words. The other four dialects differ con- [91] siderably from each other and from Nupe as spoken in the rest of the country, but most of the speakers of these dialects are bi-lingual and also speak Nupe proper.[5a]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

133 The Nupe country is low-lying and undulating, not more than 200 ft. above sea level in most parts. A few ridges of rocky hills and some flat-topped hillocks rise above the plain; the highest of these are not more than 800 ft. above sea level. On the banks of the Niger there are stretches of thick riverain forest alternating with shrub and low bush. During the rains, the forest-covered banks and the open bush are flooded far inland and become vast swamps.

The Niger and the Kaduna Rivers form the two axes of the country. A network of smaller rivers and creeks, rich in fish, provides an efficient system of natural irrigation. Upstream from Jebba Island the Niger is narrow, with rapids and dangerous rocky passages. Between Jebba Island and Baro it is broad and navigable for big steamers for half the year.

134 The soil is mostly rich and fertile, especially in the thinly populated districts to the west of the Kaduna River. Round Bida town fertility has been much reduced by over-cultivation. The soil consists of red earth mixed with laterite and is rich in silicates. There is some iron ore which is mined by the natives on the slopes of the low broken hills.

137 The vegetation is typical for an area of transition from the southern forest belt to the northern savannah. Narrow strips or patches of thick forest vegetation lie in the river valleys and watercourses; inland, thick forest, shrub, and orchard bush alternate with open parkland, except round Bida and Agaie, where it has been cleared by intensive cultivation. There is virgin forest west of Kaduna.

Nupe country is the most northern area for oil-palm, yam, and the southern variety of maize; it is at the southern limit for date-palm, shea-nut, and millet. Other trees are: locust-bean, indigo, silk-cotton, mango (a European importation), kola-nut, and banana.[6]

[3] Westermann and Bryan, 1952, pp. 85–6. Their terminology is used here.
[4] See below, pp. 55–155.
[5] To be dealt with in a forthcoming volume of the Survey.
[5a] Nadel, 1942, pp. 13–14, 18, 23, 122; 1940, p. 165; Westermann, 1925; Meek, 1925, p. 127 (and map); Temple, 1919, pp. 113, 117, 320–324.
[6] Nadel, 1942, p. 1; 1940a, p. 194.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

General

105 Most of the Nupe participate in a complex exchange-economy. Before the introduction of British money, cowrie shells were used as currency and are still used at funerals, and in reckoning marriage and other traditional payments.

The trans-Kaduna area and the country north of Bida (e.g., in Lemu), where land is fertile and plentiful, is the most prosperous. Wealth is greater where the household has a large labour unit or where a craft is practised in addition to farm work. Bida town exhibits greater extremes of poverty and wealth than the rest of the country but outstanding differences are not between individuals, but between groups, for example, urban and rural populations. It is said to be unusual to see badly-clothed men, women, or children, and under-nourishment is rare.

The traditional political offices are no longer inseparably linked with wealth, though high social status still attaches to them. Members of the *élite* can maintain their prestige fairly cheaply, as symbols of status (glazed turban or silver sword) are either heirlooms or not costly; the inherited house shows status even if in disrepair; polygyny is facilitated by the low marriage payment for " marriage in the family ";[3] travelling can be sustained by claiming hospitality from relatives.[4]

Agriculture[5]

241 Nupe farming shows considerable technical knowledge and little magic or ritual is associated with it. Shifting cultivation is practised but plots are worked for 3–4 years (Doko), 4–5 years (Mokwa), and 6–7 years (Kutigi) before they are allowed to lie fallow for from 4 to 15 years. Rotation of crops is not generally practised, though Line reported it from the area round Jima, where three years of groundnuts were followed by two of guinea-corn. Intercropping is practised and two or three crops are often grown together. The size of a plot worked by one man is usually 2–2½ acres.

A large heavy hoe (*zuku*) is used for throwing up mounds and ridges, and a small hoe (*dugba*) for weeding and lighter work. A long bush knife (*gada*), nowadays of European manufacture, is used for cutting grain stalks and digging out yams.

Farms are cleared and burnt during the dry season. First-year cultivation after clearing is in mounds; those made for yams are 2–3 ft. high, 4–5 ft. apart, and in rows 6 ft. apart. Subsequent cultivation is in ridges 1 ft. high and 3 ft. apart. Groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and some vegetables are planted in this way. Marsh cultivation is carried out in small areas of 4–6 parallel ridges. Around Doko (Beni sub-tribe) manure is obtained from the cattle of nomad Fulani, who are invited to camp on fallow plots during the dry season.

184 241 In the area west of the Kaduna River the chief cash crop is groundnuts, and cotton also grows well there. The staple food crops are millet, sorghum, yams, and, to a lesser extent, rice. Cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes are less important. The most profitable commercial crops are rice, groundnuts, cotton, and shea-nut. There is a poorer range of crops round Bida town owing to the scarcity of land; fewer yams are grown there than elsewhere and there is no bulrush millet.

In the Nupe areas of Ilorin Emirate yams are not regarded as a Nupe crop but close contact with Yoruba farmers is said to have improved the Nupe methods of cultivation. In Share[6] each farmer has two farms, one for grain and the other for

[3] See below, p. 43.
[4] Nadel, 1942, pp. 339–65; Line, 1947.
[5] Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–14, 237–8; Line, 1947.
[6] Anon. 1934–5.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

184 yams, where beans and other crops may also be sown. In Lanwa[5] yams and
241 guinea-corn are planted on the same plot in alternate years, but where the land is less exhausted yams and cotton may be planted together on the same plot. In Kakanda yams were hardly grown at all when Meek was writing (1917),[6] and guinea-corn was the staple.

241 Two types of millet—bulrush millet and "late" millet—are widely grown. Besides being staple crops, these are the only grains which may be used for ritual offerings. Cassava, introduced by the Hausa since 1910, is of minor importance and is grown during the dry season following the rice crop on irrigated land. Two varieties of rice are grown and practically all of it goes to the south as a cash crop. Onions are grown after rice in the river marshes.[7]

Within the settlements, house plots, often tended by old men, are cultivated, the main crops being green vegetables, beans, sorrel, red peppers, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, and hemp. Sugar-cane, rice, and bananas are grown on the strips of marsh running through Bida town.[8]

The Bataci and Kyedye sub-tribes, who are mainly canoe-men and fishermen, have more recently been paying greater attention to agriculture. They grow catch crops of maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and rice on their small marshland farms. There are generally two harvests each year, crops being planted as the Niger floods recede. Deep-water rice seed was asked for by a large number of Kede District inhabitants for cultivation when fishing was slack. Round Muregi rice has recently been introduced.[9]

251 Some crops (yams, sweet potatoes, etc.) are stored on the farm; others in homestead granaries (*edo*). Millet and sorghum are stored unthreshed; bulrush millet may have to be dried in an oven before storing. Crops for export are not stored.

242 The Government established 17 mixed farms around Bida Emirate during 1937–40. Each was about 12 acres and was equipped initially with a plough and two bulls, and employed two labourers.[10]

245 The soil and climate are not, on the whole, conducive to successful tree cultivation, except in the forest area west of the Kaduna River, where considerable initiative has been shown in tree-planting. The only trees to be cultivated are the citrus and mango (recent introductions) and the banana. With the exception of the oil-palm and kola, the produce of all trees is collected by women. Kola-nuts are collected by men; the produce of the oil-palm is divided between the occupier of the land and the chief of the town. Trees growing on farms are left standing and not cut down.

The banana is cultivated only round Bida, Pategi, and Labozhi. Kola (*ebi*) is grown mainly by the Kusopa of Labozhi and its cultivation is a long and difficult process. The locust-bean grows well in the town and open bush and is one of the most important trees in Nupe. The skins of the bean are used for dye and for ink, the powder in the pods for sweetening, while the seeds are an indispensable ingredient of Nupe cooking. The shea-nut grows wild in thin bush country; it is picked by the women, who also extract the fat (shea-butter). Even remote hamlets have
[439] their shea-kilns and the shea-nut is the main cash crop, 75% being sold as dried nuts for export. It is little used locally, except for lamp-oil. The oil-palm grows
249 near watercourses and in the dense forest near Yeti. The extraction of the oil is women's work as is the manufacture of soap from the oil. The oil is most important in Nupe cooking but not in external exchange. Indigo grows wild but is occasionally
[439] cultivated in two forms, grass and tree. Men make and use dye from the grass and
386] women that procured from the trees. It is traded to Yoruba.

[5] Davies, 1920.
[6] 1917.
[7] Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–7.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[10] Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.

Plants important for trade and in native industry include cotton, henna (*lali*), and hemp, both introduced from Hausa country, and gourds. The by-products of agriculture, such as grain stalks, are used by the cultivator and his family for making fences, beds, and mats; sorghum stalks yield black and red vegetable dyes. Occasionally large non-fruit-bearing trees are cut down and sold to carpenters.[11]

Organization and Division of Labour

A two-fold principle of collective family work (*efakó*) and individual work (*bucá*) applies to farm labour, and to its products, income, and granaries. Each male member of the household owns a *bucá* farm, while all work on the *efakó* farm, the produce of which is stored in the *efakó* granaries, the head controlling the disposal. Sometimes forms of productive labour other than farm work are organized according to the *efakó* system, e.g., indigo-dyeing at Mokwa.

All those who share in the *efakó* group work are housed, clothed, and fed, and have their tax and marriage payments met by the household head, who also supplies tools and pays for their repair. Personal requirements beyond this are paid for from the proceeds of the *bucá* work. The present tendency is for large *efakó* groups to disintegrate on the death of the household head, the members of the group demanding a larger measure of freedom than the *efakó* system provides.

Mutual assistance and large-scale collective labour is of two types: *egbe*, for *efakó* farm work (mainly tilling and weeding), and for work for the community as a whole, e.g., building or roofing of a chief's house, repair of a bush bridge or road or of a town wall or the N.A. rest-house, etc. *Egbe* farm work is, on the whole, performed by younger people, often members of one or more of the age-set associations; it is accompanied by drummers and musicians and concludes with a feast. Help is generally enlisted for tilling and for the first and second weeding, and *egbe* is performed first and on the largest scale on the chief's farm.

The second type of mutual assistance—*dzolo*—is less important. It is an arrangement among a number of farmers to work on each other's farms in turn, usually for the harvesting of groundnuts, cotton, and beans.

Wage labour (*kantsú*; Hausa, *lada*) plays an insignificant part in Nupe production. It is found only in large commercial centres, such as Kacha and Jebba, and in Bida for temporary employment only.

Women do practically no farm work, but they undertake the processing of agricultural produce for market and the actual marketing, and the exploitation of the shea-nut tree is entirely in the hands of women.[12]

Floor-beating is an important women's task and is made something of a ceremony. While the old women pour water on to it the young women beat the floor with wooden beaters wrapped in rugs in time to the rhythm of drums.[13]

Livestock

Cattle are of minor importance in Nupe economy. They are owned only by butchers who buy from Bornu and Fulani traders. The cattle are of the northern humped breed and are not immune from trypanosomiasis. Sheep are rarely kept for breeding but are fattened and sold.

No pigs are kept and no pork is eaten.[14] Every household keeps chickens which are bought and sold regularly in the food markets of all the larger villages. Eggs are not marketed and are eaten only rarely in Nupe country. Donkeys are kept as transport animals. Horses (mainly in Bida) are a symbol of high rank and status.[15]

[11] Nadel, 1942, pp. 59, 230–7, 238, 205–14; Line, 1947: Temple 1919, p. 236.
[12] Nadel, 1942, pp. 241–56.
[13] Malam Aliyu Bida, notes, ed. P. G. Harris
[14] Pigs were reported in Sharagi (Share) in 1918 and Pategi in 1912 (Notes by Biscoe and Budgen).
[15] Nadel, 1942, pp. 201–4.

Hunting and Fishing

224 Hunting is a significant if minor activity in some villages where it is practised by the special guild of hunters under their hereditary head *ndace*, "father of the hunters"). Nets, traps, bows-and-arrows, and occasionally flintlocks are used. Among the separated sections of the Nupe in the more sparsely populated areas, e.g., the Ebe and Basa-Nge, hunting plays a much more important part in the local economy. In the country surrounding Bida hunting has disappeared altogether.

226 The smaller rivers and creeks of Nupe country are rich in fish,[16] which are caught by spear, line, and basket; larger fish are also caught by traps and seine nets. The Kyedye use hooks laid in lines of about 100. The Bataci fish mainly in pools to which special rights attach (see below, p. 40). Nupe women trade dried [439] fish to the Igbona (Yoruba) area of Ilorin Emirate. Dried fish are also exported to Ilorin and farther south from Pategi-Lafiagi.

Markets and Trade[17]

443 Bida town has six markets, including one night market, and every other town and village has its regular market. Specialist traders travel long distances to the markets, though women who trade only as a side-line rarely attend markets more than 10 miles from their homes. Villages on the trade routes to places such as Bida or Ilorin become "relay stations" at which local traders sell to wholesalers. The stores of the European and Asiatic traders are centres for the marketing of commercial crops.

441 Specialist traders are usually men and women from Bida town. Those who go 443 outside Nupe country may stay months or years in one place, sometimes forming a Nupe enclave. There is a distinction between traders and brokers (*dilali*); the latter undertake to sell goods on commission and are organized under a guild-head.

435 Market prices are well defined and those of local produce fluctuate by season. But many goods have fixed prices and bargaining is rare except for the expensive, more rarely sold commodities.[18] Prices in Bida market are nearly always higher than in the country districts. In the country districts food prices are commonly quoted in cowries, the exchange value of which varies.

439 Railways, river steamers, and road transport have become important for market- 49 ing and in the development of production, and Nupe country is an important transit area in the north–south trade across Nigeria. The Kyedye[19] sub-tribe have a monopoly of the river traffic. Muregi is an important ferry point for Hausa traders. The ferrying rights and duties pass from compound to compound in a cycle which, together with the ferrying fees, is regulated by the Chief of the Kyedye and the village head of Muregi. The Kakanda, who are traders, formerly had the monopoly of the river traffic south of Egan, but now share this with the Kyedye. The Basa-Nge[20] also trade by canoe: their exports are handled by Nupe, Kakanda, and Igbira canoe owners, and include palm kernels, palm-oil, and cotton to Lokoja and Itobe, yams, maize, and beans to Onitsha.

439 Exports from Nupe country consist mainly of agricultural produce—rice, shea-nuts, good quality kola-nuts, smoked fish—and products of the local industries, cloth, straw hats, mats, etc. Imports include foodstuffs, mainly palm-oil, salt, and cheap kola-nuts, also potash and livestock. Re-exports include potash and beans from the north to the south, and palm-oil, salt, and kola-nuts from the south to the north. The import or export trade in one commodity is generally combined with a return trade in another.

[16] See Hermon-Hodge, 1929, p. 181 for a list of Niger fish with their Nupe names.

[17] This section is based mainly on Nadel, 1942, pp. 314–34, and relates to the period before the 1939–45 war.

[18] But according to Malam Aliyu Bida, Nupe are excellent bargainers and are known to the Hausa as *Masu Kolo Kolo*, "the hagglers."

[19] Notes on Kede District, 1950.

[20] Hopkins, 1934.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

INDUSTRIES, CRAFTS, AND PROFESSIONS

467 Industries and crafts are practised for the most part by men in their homes or in attached workshops. Some involve co-operative group production, for which the labour unit is an *efakó*, corresponding to the *efakó* for farm work (p. 26). In most cases such work is supplemented by individual (*bucá*) work. Slave labour was formerly employed. Production is organized in guilds controlled by a guild-head, and thus considerable control is exercised, through the political system, over all the more important industries of the country.

Craft guilds control the mining and smelting of ores, iron-working, brass-working, and silver-smithing, glass making, weaving, bead-work, building, wood-work and carpentry, and butchery. Individual crafts are tailoring and embroidery, leather-work, indigo-dyeing, straw-hat making, mat and bag making, basket-work, rope and twine making. Cloth, mats, bags, rope, and twine are commonly made in many villages, though they appear for sale only in the larger markets. Free professions include barber-doctors, drummers and musicians, and dancers and singers (men and women).[21]

467 325 *Iron-ore workers* are called *edudacuši*. The mines are on the slopes of the low, flat-topped hills and consist of shallow pits; the smelting furnaces are close by. A large proportion of the iron now used in smithing is bought in bars from European firms, but native-smelted iron is considered superior as it is said to be stronger and more durable. It is regularly used for the blacksmiths' own tools.[22]

467 326 [463] *Blacksmiths* are called *tswata* or *tswata gbagba*. There are one or two workshops in every village, and three " wards " of smiths in Bida. The guild-head lives in Bida and his control extends in certain respects over the whole country. It is a " closed " craft. The forge is generally in a separate hut at some distance from the compound. There are usually three or four workers, who are related, in a unit. The work is mainly *efakó* but there is some *bucá* work, consisting mainly of repairs to hoes, etc. The main products are blades for hoes, bush knives (though these are now mostly bought from the European trading stores), large nails and hooks for building, and the small brackets used in canoe making; blacksmiths also make some of their own tools, hammers, etc. Charcoal required for the furnaces is produced at intervals in quantities by two or three men of one workshop. The early rains are the smiths' busy season.

There are a number of blacksmiths in Basa-Nge District who sell their wares in the Igala markets.[23]

Brass- and silver-smiths work almost exclusively in Bida town where the furnace is often in the entrance-hut of the compound. The materials are obtained by melting down pennies (for " copper "), rifle cartridges and rods (for brass), and silver coins. The main products are brass and copper sword-hilts, daggers, horse-trappings, bowls, jugs, trays, ladles, and receptacles; brass, aluminium, and silver bangles, rings, hair-pins, and chains; signet-rings are made by a crude *cire-perdue* method. Some work is designed specifically for European buyers. The work is largely individual, but there is a system of apprenticeship.[24]

467 286 *Weavers*, known as *edeluciši*, are found in three guild sections in the three parts of Bida town. Most of them are Nupeized Yoruba. The looms are of the narrow horizontal treadle type producing cloth in strips 5 ins. wide, and of a standard length, approximately 10 yds. They are set up in a row in a half-open shed in the courtyard. The thread is now mostly of European manufacture, native-ginned and dyed cotton being rarely used. Members of the same household occupy a common workshop, but the work is mainly individual (*bucá*). A broad upright loom is used

[21] Nadel, 1942, pp. 257–9, 293–4, 299; Lins, 1947.
[22] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 259–69.
[23] Nadel, loc. cit.; Hopkins, 1934.
[24] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 269–74.

by women mostly among the Bida upper classes.[35] Their work is not organized in a guild.

Beadworkers are known as *lantana* and their craft, a luxury industry, consists of the " refining " of crude beads bought from Hausa and Arab traders; it is carried out in the entrance-hut of the compound and is entirely individual. The majority of the workers are paid at piece-rates, one of them acting as contractor, and the chain of finished beads is traded by his wife. This industry is being extinguished by imports of European beads.[36]

Glass-makers (*masaga*) claim to have originated in Egypt. Members of the guild are Moslems. The head (*tura*) is elected by popular vote. They have the most strongly organized and conspicuously self-contained of the Nupe craft guilds and there is a regular system of apprenticeship. This craft is mainly concentrated in Bida town. Black glass (*bikini*) is made, but this is being largely replaced by coloured glass (*kwalaba*) obtained by melting down bottles which have been bought by women traders. The native glass is made in one workshop, while fabrication is completed in others. Glass-workers have their market in their own quarter. Their main products are brightly coloured beads and bangles. Unlike other craftsmen, glass-workers undertake no agricultural work. There is no *bucá* work, all work being *efakó* with small wages.[37]

Tailoring and embroidery are individual crafts and members of the same household may belong to different professions. Tailors, including machine tailors, sometimes visit surrounding villages on their market days to find work. Their main products are caps, plain and embroidered gowns, trousers, and saddle-cloths. Their embroidered gowns are famous all over Nigeria.

Straw-hat makers use a " shape " of clay or wood and the crown of the hat is sometimes partly covered with leather. This is considered a " lazy " occupation, but a few craftsmen who have been taught European designs are well-to-do.

Mat-makers of certain villages, e.g., Kutigi, are famous, and make oval or square, multi-coloured grass mats. The Basa-Nge of Igala Division make baskets and mats.

Leather-workers formerly supplied a large part of the military equipment of the Nupe army—saddlery, leather shields, sword sheaths, quivers for arrows, etc. They work mainly in Bida town.[38]

Barber-doctors cut hair for men, women, and children; shave the head and cut the tribal marks of new-born babies at the naming ceremony and cut toe and finger nails. Individuals specialize in tattooing, medicines for diseases, contraceptives, cures for barrenness, treatment of lunacy, inhalants (*turare*), and minor operations such as circumcision and blood-letting. Hausa barbers remove the uvula of children.

Bida barbers, who are busy and prosperous, do not farm and their sons always become barbers, but this is not a " closed " craft. The length of apprenticeship varies. The most highly paid jobs are regarded by the family group as *efakó*, other jobs as *bucá*. There is a three-fold guild organization in Bida, corresponding to the territories of the three royal houses. Contributions from all *efakó* income are paid to the guild-head, who administers the guild fund, deducting money for common expenses and paying the rest in full to each member of the guild in turn.

There are also " *medicine-men*," whose craft is based on magical ideas and closely connected with divining and the Nupe religious system.[39]

Drummers and dancers, organized in mainly hereditary guilds, but with a system of apprenticeship, are found in all villages. Drumming may be recreational, for ceremony and ritual or ancillary to agricultural production (e.g., farming *egbe*). In

[35] Ibid., pp. 278–82.
[36] Ibid., pp. 282–3.
[37] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 274–8; 1940b, pp. 85–6; Robertson, 1935.
[38] Nadel, 1942, pp. 286–90; Line, 1947; Hopkins, 1934.
[39] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 298–301, and see below, pp. 46–7.

the villages drumming is mainly a side-line to farming. Drummers in Bida form small bands or companies, the origins of which, and the type of their performance, vary. Both men and women perform and women sing. Members of a single group may come from different families. There are no *efakó* arrangements. Such a band may be in a *bara* (client) relationship to a nobleman. The various bands or companies do not co-operate. The drums are made by wood-workers on the river.[20]

Western crafts are practised for wages in the workshops of the N.A. Public Works Dept. These craftsmen include blacksmiths, mechanics, carpenters, and bricklayers. Temporary unskilled labour is employed mainly in occasional work demanding a large body of unskilled labour, such as construction work of various kinds. Most of these labourers go home and return to their permanent work at the end of their temporary employment. Those who are farmers seek temporary employment during the dry season only, to supplement the normal source of income.[21]

Women's crafts

Pottery is practised individually. Jebba Island, Baro, Badeggi, and Bida are famous for their pottery and there is a regular trade in both potters' clay and pots. The main products are small water jugs and large water containers. Clay is prepared from swamps at Gbako River, at Badeggi, and sold by the villagers. It is tempered with powdered potsherd or brick. The building of the pots is individual work, but firing is undertaken collectively. Pots are simply fired, then given a brown wash or blackened with a concoction of shea-nut bark.

Shea-butter manufacture is carried out by women, but the roasting ovens are built by men.

Indigo-dyeing is practised only by a few *Konú* groups, where the men are weavers and the women dyers. The indigo-grass and the indigo-tree are cultivated by men, but where the indigo is picked and prepared from wild growing grass, the work is done by women. The dye-pot platforms are made by women; the dyeing is carried out individually. There are a few groups of male dyers (e.g., in Mokwa), who use a rather different technique from that employed by the women.

Women's weaving is done on upright looms 21 ins. broad, which may be of Yoruba origin. Among the Basa-Nge, older women weave patterned raffia. Fishing-nets in Kede are made by old men and women from *rama* fibre.[22]

Weapons and tools include spears, bows and poisoned arrows used by the more remote groups, and knives with blades 8 to 10 ins. long. A few men use flint-locks, and formerly a whole section of the Nupe army was equipped with guns.

Dug-out canoes are used by the Bataci as well as the Kyedye. Those of the latter are large and square with caulked top strakes. They are mostly obtained from Onitsha and the lower Benue.

Musical instruments include a central-hole flute (the blow-hole is midway between the ends of the tube), pipes, clarinets (of Hausa origin), various drums and rattles, long bronze trumpets (forming part of the royal insignia), and, in some areas, bull-roarers and animal horns.

Gabi figures are statues of different origins. Two bronze figures stand unprotected in the centre of the village of Jebba Island near a dilapidated hut which is said to have been formerly a temple. There are seven figures at Tada village which are kept in a round hut and carefully tended; some of these are human figures and some animal and they appear to be of diverse origins, but are regarded traditionally as having been left by Tsoede on his flight up the Niger.[23]

[20] Nadel, op cit., pp. 301–3. For an outline of the *bara* system see below, p. 35.
[21] Nadel, op cit., pp. 304–8.
[22] Nadel, op cit., pp. 235, 293–7; Hopkins, 1934; Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[23] Temple, 1919, pp. 114, 117, 198, 332; Meek, 1925, vol. I. p. 108; Walker, 1934; see also Palmer, 1931.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

602 Local and Kinship Grouping

611 Descent and succession to offices and the inheritance of rights to land and other property are normally patrilineal among all Nupe. At the same time kin ties traced through the mother may afford opportunities for advancement and, especially in Bida the capital, maternal connections with persons of rank may be used to advantage in the political sphere. The Nupe term *dengi* connotes kinship in the widest sense to include all recognized cognates, but the effective *dengi* of an individual consists mainly of his agnates or patrilineal relatives descended from a common ancestor several generations back. Maternal kin ties, on the other hand, are rarely traced or effective beyond one or two generations. Groups of male patrikin are significant both as the nuclei of residential groups in extended families and in the status system of the chiefdom.

596 592 The domestic unit is usually an elementary or polygynous family, i.e., a man, his wife or wives, and unmarried children.[1] This, or a larger group consisting of a man, his wives, married sons, their wives and children, or of a set of brothers, their wives, children, and grandchildren, the nucleus of which is thus a patrilineage of small span, inhabits a division of the compound, keeps house and eats in common, and forms a single productive or labour unit. No special name exists for this group apart from that referring to its organization as a labour unit or *efakó*. The larger unit was formerly general, but under modern conditions the family has tended to divide when sons become adult. The domestic family normally forms part of a larger social unit, the "house" (*emi*), which is both a kinship and a territorial group and may also be referred to as a *katamba*, a term for the common gateway or entrance to an enclosed compound. An *emi* may be localized in one compound or may be distributed over a number of adjacent compounds, occupying either the whole or part of a ward (*efu*). In Bida the *emi* tends to be more widely scattered. The nucleus of an *emi* again consists of a body of patrikin to which wives and others are attached. Its head is known as the *emitsó* ("owner of the house"), a position which falls to the senior male member of the group, who is succeeded by the next in seniority of the same generation, and so on. When a section of an *emi* separates physically it continues to recognize its former head while he lives, but on his death it often attains an independent position with its own head. The size of the *emi* varies considerably. In Bida, those of commoners are often small and may contain no more than six or eight individuals; in the smaller settlements and among the nobility they may include as many as 60 persons.

602 Beyond these groups the Nupe also often recognize kinship over a still wider field. Thus a whole village may be regarded as descended from one ancestor, but such essentially mythical kinship links do not involve any specific kinship claims and obligations.

565 614 The three royal houses of Nupe may be regarded as large lineages or "clans," for they claim to observe rigid patrilineal descent believed to have proceeded from sanctified "first ancestors."

Forms of Settlement: House Types[2]

361 Nupe live in compact villages or towns (*ezi* is the term for both) which vary considerably in size; in Bida Emirate, besides the capital, there are three considerable settlements: Doko (800), Mokwa (2,000), Kutigi (3,000). Some, on the other

[1] Nadel, 1942, pp. 25–33.
[2] Nadel, 1942, pp. 24, 27–32, 34, 36– , 226–7; 1938; Temple, 1919, p. 334; Malam Aliyu Bida, notes, ed. Harris.

hand, are hardly larger than a *tunga* (see below). An *ezi* used to be encircled by a large wall, the ruins of which can still be seen in many places, which formed a protection from the dangers of war. Some Nupe villages of to-day have sprung from the amalgamation of smaller groups, fusing for purposes of protection against Fulani raiders.

To-day there is at least one small mosque in every Nupe settlement except in the riverain villages, while pagan shrines are concealed in the houses. All settlements have good wells and round roasting-ovens of red clay. A square of open booths forms the market. To the west of every village is an open space (*finzo*) where corn is threshed.

An *ezi* usually has several *tunga* settlements or hamlets; Kutigi, for example, has six, founded between 1860 and 1910. The *tunga* are much smaller "daughter settlements" or "colonies" of the *ezi*. They seldom consist of more than three family groups (*emi*—see p. 31 above); they are less permanent than the "real" village, and lack the religious and ancestral bonds which tie a village to its locality. They have no separate markets or age-sets. *Tunga* settlements have been formed by groups moving out into the bush in search of new farmland; they are always referred to as the *tunga* of a certain *ezi* and rarely, if ever, develop into villages themselves. Close contact, intermarriage, and new emigration link a *tunga* with its *ezi*.

The ward (*efu*) is a sector of a large village or town and is made up of a number of compounds; except in some riverside villages they are often separated from each other by stretches of open land or cultivated fields studded with clumps of trees. Each *efu* has its own name, derived from a topographical peculiarity or a sociological feature, or from the origin of the inhabitants. The number of *efu* in an *ezi* varies; the old city of Bida had four, Doko has five.

The walled compound or "house" (*emi*), already mentioned with reference to its occupants, consists of a number of huts, mostly round, with very thin walls of clay and grass-thatched roofs. The high mud wall surrounding the *emi* opens upon a path or open space where there is a gateway or entrance hall to the compound, consisting of a larger hut known as *katamba*. The *katamba* is used as a meeting place for the men, as a guest house for strangers, or for the carrying out of part-time industries such as mat- or net-making. Within the *emi* are smaller partitions and a number of smaller *katamba* invisible from the outside. A chief sometimes has a larger and more imposing *katamba* with a high gabled roof and windows. Huts and entrance hall are often decorated with ornaments worked in relief into the clay. Signs of occupational specialization, such as a blacksmith's furnace, are sometimes found. A man and each of his wives has a separate hut.

Granaries (*edo*) which stand among the living-huts in the compound, are egg-shaped, raised off the ground, about 7 ft. high and 4 ft. in diameter, with thick clay walls and a grass roof. The opening is about halfway up one side and has a clay lid. There are also cylindrical ovens, 5 ft. high and 3 ft. wide, for drying bulrush millet and shea-nuts, and for making soap, outside the compound. These are communal property, owned by the women.

The Political System[3]

The political organization of the Nupe is centralized under the *Etsu* Nupe, who is the highest title-holder in a nobility graded by precedence but within which there is provision for promotion. Little is known of the system of kingship in pre-Fulani times, though some features from the ancient Nupe system doubtless survive in the original Nupe dynasty at Patigi. In former times there were ritual taboos in conformity with which the *Etsu* wore only white, ate food prepared only by his wives, and might not be seen eating by any stranger. The *ndakó gboyá* cult[4] for

[3] Nadel, 1942, pp. 87–91.
[4] See below, pp. 48–9.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

643 The ndakó gboyá cult for
[754] the detection and killing of witches might not be performed in or near the town in which the *Etsu* was living, nor might anyone be put to death there. All these features, together with the ancient rule of inheritance whereby the first son born during his father's reign as *Etsu* became the heir, have disappeared, while a new background of respect for the memory of Mallam Dendo,[5] the first of the Fulani rulers of Nupe, has been created. What was once probably a divine kingship has been replaced by a system of rule by the militarily strong and the king has become *primus inter pares* among the hierarchy of rank holders.

643 The three dynasties stemming from Mallam Dendo to-day succeed to the throne
633 in strict rotation. The *Etsu* is the head of the reigning house, the *Shaba*[6] ("heir-presumptive") the head of the dynasty next in succession, and the *Kpotuŋ* the head of the third house. Bida town is divided into three sections (*eka*) each bearing the name of one of the royal dynasties and each having its own royal palace. The country around is similarly divided into three parts.

643 Every *Etsu* Nupe has sought during his reign to increase the power and wealth of his house. Former sources of income were the royal monopoly of the kola-nut trade,[7] the control of the *ndakó gboyá* anti-witchcraft society, and profits from the royal estates and from the slave trade. To-day, apart from his salary, the *Etsu* receives only profits from the royal estates and from occasional trading.

Status and Titles[8]

565 There are marked status differences in Nupe society and many symbols of social
554 distinction, such as the wearing of an indigo-blue glazed turban by the nobility, ways of greeting equals and superiors, the giving of kola-nuts (the number and quality reflecting precisely the social status of the donor and recipient), and the right to go about on horseback. Families and lineages appear to fall into class divisions according to the status in the system of ranked titles ascribed to or achieved by some of their members. While each class is, in the main, a closed group, there are opportunities for promotion within the higher classes and also some inter-class nobility, whereby entry into the higher orders may be obtained through wealth, war service, marriage, or "clientship."[9] Social ascent is controlled and marked by the hierarchy of titles. Within a grade of titles promotion to a higher title entails a reshuffle among the holders of the lower titles.

565 Of the three classes, the first, *waci* or *gitsúši* (the royal nobility) consists of the descendants of Mallam Dendo in three royal houses, Usman Zaki, Masaba, and Umaru, under their heads, *Etsu*, *Shaba*, and *Kpotuŋ*. This class is detached in origin and status from the rest of the community on account of the part it played in the wars and its position as royal fief-holders (*egba*)[10] in charge of large districts of the kingdom. The new king is elected from the *gitsúši*, every title-holder in which has in principle a chance of becoming king, though the royal prince who succeeds to the throne will generally have attained the rank of *Shaba*.[11] As well as the reshuffle of personnel holding the various titles which takes place on the death of a high title-holder and the subsequent appointment of his successor, there is a large-scale exchange of residences, younger brothers or sons moving into houses vacated by the death or promotion of their older brothers or fathers, for the residences of

[5] See above, p. 22.
[6] This office has been allowed to lapse since 1935 and the main functions have devolved upon the next in rank.
[7] i.e., the best kola-nuts grown at Labozhi.
[8] Nadel, 1942, pp. 93–103.
[9] See below, p. 35.
[10] See below, p. 36.
[11] Nadel states that only twice was a man who had not acquired the title of *Shaba* (or *Kpotuŋ* if the *Shaba* had died) made *Etsu*. Of the 41 royal titles held in 1936, 10 were held by Usman Zaki, 17 by Masaba, and 14 by Umaru, the ruling house at that time. See Nadel, 1942, pp. 95–7, for a detailed list of titles held by the various houses in 1936. Apparently new titles are often introduced.

the highest *gitsi* ranks go with the title. First appointment to a title and promotion to a higher one are granted by the king in council with the royal princes and other officers of state. Any able-bodied man of senior age, proved loyalty, and ability, and good health, of the Fulani families, is eligible for admission to a *gitsúši* title, but favouritism, intrigue, and bribery also play a part, and the titles which a family has been able to accumulate are an indication of its influence at court and its favour with the ruling king. When a title-holder becomes incapable, through age or illness, of fulfilling his duties, a younger man is appointed, the former holder being styled " old *Kpotuŋ* " or whatever the title may be. Nobody with any kind of deformity can hold a title, since the system was originally based on service in war and offices vital to the safety of the state. Investiture takes place in the *Etsu*'s house, in the presence of the *Alkali* or *Liman*, a propitious day having first been selected by mallams or diviners. The candidate is addressed by the *Etsu*, then clothed in a cloak and embroidered gown by the *Alkali* who also places a turban on his head. After prayers in which all join, the new holder rides through the town accompanied by other title-holders, and dismounts to greet princes or heads of houses at their residences.

The second class is that to which the *ticiži* or *rowni* (office-holding nobility) belong. The name *rowni* means " turbans " and refers to the fact that the bestowal of such a title is symbolized by the gift of a turban from the king. There are three groups of *ticiži*, each of which is regarded as a sharply defined social order: the *sarakiži*, the *ena manži*, and the *ena wuži*. The *sarakiži* is a group of civil and military nobility consisting of town elders (*ena ndeji*) and war leaders (*ena 'kuŋ*). The second order, *ena manži*, comprises the mallams, the religious and judicial officials, such as the *Alkali* (judge), and the *Liman* (religious head), with their assistants and scribes. The third order, *ena wuži*, which is the lowest in rank but still possesses great influence, consists of the court slaves.

Many of the *saraki* titles are identical in name with those bestowed on the village elders, but the symbols of status, even when similar, refer to very different social contexts. *Saraki* titles are, like *gitsú* titles, generally granted by the *Etsu* in council with princes and other officers of state. Theoretically, at least, outsiders, even commoners, who have won his favour may be admitted to the ranks. Only a few of the higher titles, which have become the prerogatives of certain families, are hereditary. Several titles cannot be accumulated in a single family. They are bestowed exclusively on one member of the family group; no other close relative can then claim a title or office in addition to the one already bestowed on his " house." To-day wealth and financial influence are important factors in gaining titles and the *saraki* group includes rich traders, as well as descendants of the old official nobility of pre-Fulani Nupe, and Nupe families who became partisans of the Fulani conquerors. These *sarakiži* received no salary, but were formerly granted land and slaves.

The *Ndeji* (" father of the town "), the head of the *ena ndeji*, is in charge of the affairs of Bida and the most powerful of the officers of state because he is closest to the king. At the head of the other civil title-holders he holds the daily council (*nkó*) with the king himself. The military titles (*ena 'kuŋ*) were formerly those of war leaders, the different titles being associated with special responsibilities.

The *ena manži*, the order of mallams, is " a class between classes, a mobile privileged intelligentsia." It includes the *Alkali*, the *Liman*, and their assistants. The detailed knowledge of Moslem law and literature and the specialized training required limits the number of candidates. But the offices of *Liman* and *Alkali* are sometimes hereditary, reflecting a tradition of learning in certain families, and political influence, for many eminent mallams are of Fulani stock. Mallams are highly esteemed by everyone and are placed about commoners even when they are without rank or title and have only little learning. They are allowed to marry daughters and sisters of higher born families.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

565 Below the *sarakiši* comes a group of minor office-holders, heads of the Bida craft guilds, who receive their titles and the customary gift of a turban from the *Etsu*. The head of the Bida brokers, who acts as an agent for the king in trade and commercial matters in the capital, holds a similar position.

565 567 The lowest titled class in the Nupe social order is that of the *ena wuši*, whose members bear the titles of the former court slaves.[13] Formerly these titles were held by men of high birth captured in war and given titles in return for loyal service; they could rise in the service of the king as bodyguards, police, messengers, tax collectors, etc. A new king usually took over the officials of his predecessor.

565 Below the orders of title-holders come the commoners (*talakiši*), who constitute the great majority of the population.

Patronage[13]

566 675 A system of patronage or clientship is an important feature of Nupe society. The client (*bara*) attaches himself to the household of his patron as a servant or in some other capacity from which he may rise to the position of a trusted friend and may even marry into the patron's family. Clients may be divided into three categories: those who seek political protection without surrendering their independence, who do not work for their patron but are regarded rather as "adopted children"; those who are poor and anxious to avoid hard work on the land; and those who hope to achieve some eminence by attaching themselves to a man of position and influence. The clients of the royal princes may rise to high positions and eventually become the *bara* of a ruling king, their rank then being almost equal to that of the official nobility. Indeed, rich and ambitious men may even buy themselves a clientship in the house of a royal prince or of the king.

The system is beneficial to both parties, the client receiving material benefit and protection and possibly a title, and the patron acquiring servants, soldiers for the contingent he must provide for the king's army, and followers to add to his prestige.

Age-sets[14]

561 Boys and young men in a village or town are grouped in three graded associations: *ena wàwágiši*, for boys between the ages of about 10 and 15; *ena dzákangiši*, of ages *c.* 15 to 20, and *ena gbarúfuši*, of ages *c.* 20 to 30. Every age-set (*ena*) passes successively through these grades. Except in the capital, there is only one set or association in each grade within the local community at any one time. Each is led by an older man or by a boy from the highest rank of the next grade. The head of the highest, known as *ndákotsú*, is chosen from among adults and has considerable influence. The main emphasis within the age-sets is on seniority. Titles, often copying those for adults in the wider society, are distributed by the leader on the basis of reputation, ability, and merit, sometimes anticipating the future rank of the holder. Those acquired in the highest grade may be retained by the young man for life. The chief public functions of the sets lie in the execution of co-operative tasks, but they also have a recreational side.

For girls, an association (*ena*) exists only for the lowest age-set.

Government[15]

631 Prior to the more recent developments of local government, the Nupe kingdom was divided into four zones for the purposes of political, judicial, and tax administration. The first was the territory of the conquered and tributary "outside" peoples; the second, within the boundaries of the kingdom proper, included the

[13] For a description of slavery proper, see below, p. 41.
[14] Nadel, 1942, pp. 122–7.
[15] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 383–401; 1935a, pp. 200–71, 292.
[16] Nadel, 1942, pp. 115–18

631 countries of Beni and Kyedye; the third comprised a wider ring of remaining towns and districts of the kingdom, mostly in Trans-Kaduna; the fourth was Bida town, the seat of the central government, which formed an administrative district of its own.

The "outside" peoples consisted of Yoruba (Yagba and Bunu), Kakanda, Kamberi, Gbari, and Gbira, with some Nupe sections (mostly Dibo and Ebe). Their districts were not regularly administered by the central government, but they were recognized as being under the "protection" of Bida, and paid an annual tribute in slaves, collected by royal agents (*tuci* or *ajele*). Other Emirates and chieftainships were bound by "treaties" not to raid Bida's dependent territories, though Bida itself could raid its own "outside" peoples. The royal messengers visited the territories with small armies and the possession of such a force was an essential qualification for the post of *ajele*.

The kingdoms of Beni and Kyedye,[18] the two small "states within the State," were directly under the king and their chiefs acted as a kind of royal agents, their appointment and succession being subject to confirmation by the king. They could administer law in cases which came into the category of *gyara*, "reparation," and collected tax in their areas on the king's behalf.

The rest of the Nupe kingdom was divided into areas each containing a town with its dependent villages and *tunga*, which were administered as fiefs by their lords (*egba*). The latter might be members of the royal house or of the official nobility, or court slaves. Each received his fief from the *Etsu*, together with his title with which the fief remained permanently linked; the appointment to an *egba* post thus conferred a definite status. Fiefs were also bestowed on individuals, usually relatives or favourites of the king, independent of rank or office. A lord rarely visited his fief; his representative, usually one of his slaves or serfs living on his lands, collected tax for him. The *egba* had to give a proportion of this tax to the king. Among his other duties was the administration of justice in lesser cases.

633 Bida town was administered directly by the king and his officers of state, but, like the kingdom, was divided into areas, the inner city, where the Beni of pre-Fulani Bida lived, "greater" Bida, and the strangers' quarter. Cutting across these divisions were the small local units, described by Nadel as "factions rather than organized town wards," consisting of the followers of various members of the powerful nobility. In fact, the people of Bida refer to the different parts of the town by the titles of the nobility who have their houses there.

In more recent times the affairs of Bida Emirate have been in the hands of the *Etsu* and a council of four, consisting of the *Ndeji*, President (formerly "father of the town" of Bida), the *Maiyaki* or *Sarkin Yaki*, Minister of Public Works (formerly Commander in War), the *Nágya*, formerly District Head of Mokwa and a member of the nobility, and the *Etsu Tafiey*, official representative of the commoners and formerly chief of the Beni confederacy.[17] Other officials include the *Gabi Seidi*, formerly the *Etsu*'s chief slave and now the official messenger between the Emir's residence and the Divisional Office of the Nigerian Administration. Seven District Heads are appointed by the *Etsu* from the ranks of the higher royal nobility.
634 Exceptions are the *Kuta* of the Kyedye sub-tribe,[18] who is the District Head of Kuta District, and the *Sheshi* of Kacha. The District Heads live in the largest town of their District and make frequent tours of inspection of the area and regular visits to the *Etsu*. They are responsible to the *Etsu* for law and order in their District and for the collection of taxes.[19]

633 The *Dikko*, head of the nomadic Fulani (*bororoji*) in Bida Emirate, fills a
648 traditional position in Fulani social life and ceremonial. He acts as liaison officer

[18] See below, p. 38.
[17] c. 1930.
[18] See below, p. 38.
[19] Nadel, 1942, pp. 138–65.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

633 648 between the central administration and the Fulani, counts Fulani cattle and collects *jangali* (cattle tax).[20]

634 The Districts of Ilorin Province with a mixed Nupe and Yoruba population sometimes had two District Heads. When Sharagi District was placed in Ilorin Emirate (*c.* 1913) the Nupe chief (*Ndakpoto*) was made District Head, though he is said to have had no control over the people as a whole. The Igbona Yoruba head (*Olupo*) is said to have been effective among the Yoruba. The District Heads of Lafiagi and Pategi are called *Rasi*, that of Kupa *Mahun*, of Kakanda *Agunshu*, and of Shaku *Kpotuy*.[21]

Village Organization

621 Every Nupe village constitutes a separate political entity, each with its own head (*Eitsu*) who "owns" the village, controls its main resources and the lives of its inhabitants, and often assumes its name. In Jebba and Mokwa the position of head is filled by the promotion of one of the senior elders of the village. Elsewhere it is hereditary in one house (*emi*). In either case the appointment has to be confirmed by the *Etsu* Nupe. The interregnum before the appointment of the new head is filled by a high ranking elder, *ndeji*, "father of the town." Some villages have heads officially appointed by the administration who are distinct from the traditional heads, called *Etsu nyenkpa* ("money," i.e., tax, "chief") as opposed to *Eitsu*, "town chief." In some riverain villages, e.g., Funga, Nantu, Batachi, Edogi, and Badeggi, the village head is called *gago*, a title said to be used by Hausa speakers.[22]

622 The Basa-Nge of Igala Division are divided into 14 inland and riverain units under a village headman responsible to the *ewaja* (?District Head). These headmen are chosen by the elders of each unit, but their appointment is subject to the approval of the *Ata* Gala, from whom many of them hold titles and beads of office.[23]

The village head is responsible for the appointment of the village elders from the ranks of the family heads, the control and apportionment of land, and the enforcement of fishing rights. He organizes and partly finances certain religious rites linked with chiefship, though he is not regarded as the religious head of the community. He arbitrates in disputes and has certain limited and informal judicial powers; he also organizes any concerted action of the community or large-scale work such as road-making. Formerly he had special prerogatives and still receives annual gifts in kind in some small villages.

623 The village head is assisted by a council of elders (*gusaši*, sing. *gusa*, the "old ones," or *ticili*, the "titled ones") who act as mouthpieces, agents, and informants of the chief. They are the heads of families or groups of families who live together in one ward (*efu*). Their titles are conferred on them by the chief, some titles reflecting the occupation followed by the elder and his family. The position of an elder as head of a specific group is recognized by the community, as is the division of the affairs of the village between a number of elders.

624 In villages where the headship is hereditary, important priestly offices are not usually identified with political office, the office of village priest (*Eigi*) being kept in the junior branch of the house. *Eitsu* and *Eigi*, "town chief" and "town priest," often appear in genealogies as elder and younger brother in the classificatory sense. In those villages where the head is elected from the senior title-holders, religious ceremonies are performed by the elder who is entrusted with the rule of the village during an interregnum and whose office is hereditary, so that instead of there being a hereditary chief there is, as it were, a hereditary "king-maker."

[20] Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.
[21] Biscoe, 1918; Notes on Kakanda District, 1934.
[22] Rochfort Rae, 1931; Notes on Kakanda District, 1934. The title *gago* is also found in the Kamberi areas north of the Nupe country. Mathews (1916) says that it is generally used by Hausa speakers to mean village head. In Bargery's Hausa dictionary the meaning is given as 'a pagan chief.'
[23] Hopkins, 1934.

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623 The full council of elders is summoned only on important occasions. The normal routine of village government is carried on by an inner council, consisting of two or three elders of the highest rank who meet informally at the village head's house.

Succession to the highest titles may, like the headship, be either hereditary or by promotion; but succession to the lower titles is nearly always hereditary.[34]

The Political System of the Kyedye

634 184 The government of the Kyedye sub-tribe is centralized from Muregi and is the monopoly of a selected and privileged body consisting of the Kyedye chief (*Kuta*, also called *Etsu Nya Nuwa*, "the king of the water") and his titled councillors. The *Kuta* has always been subordinate to the *Etsu* Nupe, but, although the district is now administered centrally from Bida in the same way as other districts in the Emirate, no attempt has ever been made to displace the hereditary rulers.

The office of *Kuta* is hereditary in two of the three chiefly lineages, these two being the "founders" and claiming a common ancestor. The rules of succession are not rigid, however, since the wishes of the *Etsu* Nupe, the title-holders, and the people, and administrative ability are also considered. The *Kuta* appears in public with impressive ceremonial and travels in a state canoe which must never be entered by a woman and must never touch the bank. His authority derives from the tradition that the first *Kuta* was invested by Tsoede, his strong economic position, and the fact that most of the important political offices are allotted to his kinsmen. The heir-apparent is known as the *Egba*; the post is held by the most senior of the *Kuta*'s relatives.

The offices of state fall into two categories: first the *ticiki*, title-holders and councillors, with five offices, four of them hereditary; second the *egbaki*, who are delegates in charge of settlements and colonies. There are many grades of *egbaki*, following a strict system of precedence and promotion. Succession in most cases is not automatic but goes to the most suitable candidate of sufficient seniority. In the early days, three title-holders acted as the *Kuta*'s district heads. Each was allotted a section of the river and was formerly allowed to levy tolls on river traffic. To-day these title-holders have no executive power, though they are still accorded respect, and village heads deal directly through the *Kuta*. There are also "household" titles, mainly in Muregi town, bestowed by the *Kuta* upon his followers.

The *Kuta* had at one time a council of state with advisors, though in effect he was an absolute ruler responsible only to the *Etsu* Nupe. In 1945 a district council was formed, consisting of the *Kuta*, *Alkalin* Muregi, village head Muregi, *Tsado Kuta*, *Liman Kuta*, district scribe, and Muregi school mallam. Meetings are not held regularly, but only when matters of importance need to be discussed.[35]

Organization of Kutigi town (Beni sub-tribe)

633 Kutigi town comprises four originally independent groups: the *Kintsóki*, "owners of the country," the original inhabitants under their head (*Iitsu*) who was formerly town chief; the *Ndaceki* (hunters), aboriginal Nupe but from another village; the *Kónu* (prisoners of war), freed slaves of Yoruba (Yagba) origin, occupied in weaving and indigo-dyeing; *Benú*, the largest group, providing the tribal name, but of alien origin, having arrived in the country from Bornu about 1800. The *Benú* gained political supremacy over the other sections and became the recognized rulers of Kutigi and the neighbouring villages. They are Moslems, wealthy traders and owners of horses and cattle.[36]

[34] Nadel, 1942, pp. 50–8.
[35] Nadel, 1942, pp. 24–5; 1946a, pp. 174–81; Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[36] Nadel, 1938.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

627 The village head has limited and informal judicial powers. Minor cases are settled by him with two or three members of the council and the elders of the ward to which the litigant belongs. The procedure is informal and discussion rarely becomes heated. The authority of these courts is gradually being surrendered to the officially recognized courts. Cases requiring formal justice are referred to the
671 Native Court under the professional Moslem judge (*Alkali*) of the District.
692 In modern Nupe, Moslem law is paramount; the judges (pl. *Alkalai*) reside in Bida and the other Districts. The Bida town court is both a local court and appeal court for the Districts. The *Etsu* and his councillors form a higher court of appeal for cases concerned with land.

671 A marked disparity has been reported between Moslem law and the traditional
182 culture, particularly in rural communities, where the social and economic conditions differ most widely from the social life of which Moslem law is an expression. Peasants who were familiar with and understood the old customary law, often insist, when they come before the courts, on being accompanied by a mallam or person of standing who is familiar with the " new " law.

Among the Kyedye the *Alkali* holds his court in Muregi; the *Kuta* (chief) and delegates (district heads) have no judicial authority.

692 Jurisdiction over grave crimes was formerly the responsibility of the *Etsu*
696 Nupe. The death penalty was exacted for theft in the night, " big theft," murder, and treason. Traditionally the only villages in which executions could be performed were the *ledu* (pl. *leduzhi*) villages—Jebba, Gbere, Tada, Jiragi, Sulati, Fofo, Taiji, and Cewuru, which lie along the banks of the Niger 10 to 15 miles apart, between Jebba in the north and Eggan in the south. The king's hangmen resided here and a criminal was generally taken for execution to the *ledu* village nearest to his home.

778 Each of these villages possesses a " chain of Tsoede," generally kept at the
782 chief's house; it is a typical heavy iron slave or prison chain, up to 30 ft. long, with arm- and leg-irons. Traditional sacrifices of beer and blood are made to it, and it protects the village from sickness and brings fertility to women. Jebba and Tada, the oldest of the *leduzhi*, also possess bronze figures.[27]

INHERITANCE

428 The personal property of men is inherited by their sons, that of women by their daughters. The family farm goes to the relative next in seniority, younger brother or eldest son, in the classificatory sense.[28]

586 A widow may be inherited by her husband's sister's son or her husband's younger brother; custom forbids remarriage with an elder brother. Islam, however, allows remarriage with elder or younger brother.[29]

LAND TENURE

423 Land tenure in different parts of the country has been variously affected by two factors, namely the appropriation as estates held by the nobility of parts of the tribal lands after the Fulani conquest, and the density of population.

The royal house of Bida holds the title to certain lands by right of conquest. Land was also bestowed on others by the royal house for services rendered, and all individual titles to land are held to be ultimately derived from this one source. The clearing and first hoeing of the royal estates is done by large-scale communal labour. The subsequent work was formerly done by slaves, but to-day by paid labour.

Most of the appropriation of land occurred in the area east of the Kaduna River. Here population is more dense and there is a complex system of land ownership and transfer. Owing to the consequent shortage, disputes are frequent and particu-

[27] Nadel, 1942, pp. 56–8, 165–79; 1940a, p. 181; 1935b.
[28] Nadel, 1942, pp. 31–2, 245.
[29] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 249–50.

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423 larly bitter in Bida. In the area west of the Kaduna River, there was less appropriation and there is less pressure on land. Land tenure is on a traditional tribal or village basis; there is no severe competition for possession and land disputes are rare.

562 425 Traditionally men only could hold land; acquisition by women is still comparatively rare and occurs only around Bida. Rights may be acquired in various ways:

(1) By a member of a non-land-owning family exercising his right as a member of the village community; land thus acquired is inalienable.
(2) By short-term lease from an individual land-holder for two to five years; this method is known as *aro* (" borrowing "); land thus acquired is also inalienable.
(3) By a member of a land-owning family exercising his claim, on his marriage, to part of the land held by the family.
(4) By a stranger adopted into the household, in the same manner as (3).
(5) By lease for an indefinite period, against payment plus rent in kind; this has now become tantamount to purchase.
(6) By hereditary tenantship; no rent is paid but a share in the produce is given.
(7) By " primary " tenantship; rights are ceded to another in recognition of services rendered, but the tenant must provide a share of the produce. If the primary tenant is not himself a farmer, as is often the case among members of the Nupe nobility, he will sub-let the land for a high initial fee and rent in kind.

423 471 Village land is held and apportioned by the chief. It is of three types:

(1) Land in the hands of families or individuals, whether worked or fallow (*lati*).
(2) Vacant land which has reverted to the chief for future allotment (*gonta*).
(3) The fringe of " reserve " land or bush, the boundaries of which are unmarked (*cika*).

Village land rarely stretches more than three miles from the village. Small individual plots (*bucá*) are mainly near the village; larger family plots of 12–16 acres (*efakó*) are generally farther afield. Family plots do not all lie near together. Land is not fenced except on the marshland plots near Kacha.

No fruit trees on village land may be cut down without the permission of the head, who has a special right to all fruit-bearing trees. Shea-nut trees on vacant land are common property, and women collect the fruit and share it. Shea-nut trees on occupied farmland belong to the owner of the farm. Farm plots in the village itself are owned by the people living in the compound adjoining the plot; they are apportioned and inherited within the houses and never left uncultivated.[80]

Tenure of fishing pools is important among riverain groups. Among the Batači every pool has a name and a specific owner. A pool may be owned by the village collectively or by an individual or it may be attached to a title and change ownership with it. Pools owned by individuals can be inherited. Rents are fixed by custom and do not vary from year to year; yearly fishing rights may be bought by individuals.[81] Strangers in Kede district seek formal permission to fish from the *Kuta*, through the village head in whose area they settle. The period of settlement varies from a few months to about three years, but there is no permanent settlement. Presents of fish may be made to the village head and the *Kuta*, or strangers' tax paid to the Bida Treasury.[82]

431 651

[80] Nadel, 1942, pp. 180–204; Temple, 1919, p. 331.
[81] Prices given in the appendix to the Notes on Kede District (1950) vary between 2s. 6d. and £2.
[82] Notes on Kede District, 1950.

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Slavery

567 Slaves attached to the royal house and the nobility could rise to positions of wealth and influence, and some of the former titled court slaves have in recent times become Native Authority officials. Slaves had a certain measure of social and economic independence; though female slaves had no income and their earnings belonged to their master, they might become the concubines of a free man and be given their freedom. Any children born would in any case be free. Male slaves could seek to purchase their independence.

Slaves were obtained both by capture in war and by purchase in the Bida market. Owners had the power of life and death over slaves, though in practice they rarely maltreated them. Indeed, when slavery was abolished, many former slaves elected to remain as unpaid servants with their former masters. Children born to a man's slaves were called *mangi* (" children of the house ") and could not be sold, maltreated, or killed. They were brought up as members of the household but were not entitled to a share in the master's inheritance. A master would, however, provide the marriage payment for a marriage arranged by him for one of his slaves with another slave.[33]

Pawning

426 The practice of pawning human pledges grew to enormous proportions before 568 its final suppression in 1933–34. Under the pressure of unexpected or imperative demands, one person in a family, preferably a male, would be pawned for 5–10 years. Pawning was regarded as a disgrace and the pawns were looked down on by their masters and even by the household slaves.[34]

Position of Women

562 Women's activities, other than household tasks, include spinning, weaving, cooking cakes for sale in the market, and hairdressing (a lucrative profession). Women are also doctors and traders, though those whose professional duties keep them away from home for long periods are commonly regarded as " loose " women. They collect the produce of all trees except palm-oil and kola; they cultivate and sell groundnuts and root crops and help to trade some of the men's crops.

A woman's earnings as a trader cannot be touched by her husband, but remain her property until her death, when he inherits them. Among commoners a woman is often better-off than her husband and may lend him money for taxes and the purchase of tools, and even provide for marriages and funerals. The inter-sex hostility, which has been accentuated by the economic independence and consequent sexual freedom of women, also shows itself in the Nupe conception of witchcraft, where a witch is thought to do mystically what a woman actually does in everyday life.[35]

562 The most important women's titles are those of *nimwoye*, of the royal house of 565 Masaba, and *sagi*, of the royal houses of Umaru and Usman Zaki alternatively. Quarrels between women are brought before women holding these titles and the women of Bida town and the villages bring them gifts. *Sagi* is also the title of the " head of the women " in every Nupe village. The chief woman commoner in Bida has the title of *sonya;* she organizes all large-scale women's work and is entrusted with the supervision of the market. She is now an official of the Native Administration, receiving a small salary. The status of a woman by descent is not 554 reduced on marriage, since Nupe class sentiments cannot admit a lowering of the status of anyone high-born.[36]

[33] Nadel, 1942, pp. 103–8, 157.
[34] Ibid., pp. 311–13.
[35] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 172–81.
[36] Nadel, 1942, pp. 321–4, 147–56; Temple, 1919, p. 326.

CULTURAL FEATURES AND THE LIFE CYCLE

Physical Characteristics: Tribal Marks: Dress

142 While the aboriginal Nupe sub-tribes (Ebe, Beni, Ebagi, and Bataci) are negro in appearance, there are indications of considerable non-negro elements in their ancestry. A striking type with oval face, high cheekbones, and slightly mongoloid eyes is often found among those of mixed Fulani descent.

181 The Nupe are known all over Nigeria as an industrious and formerly warlike people. They are progressive and anxious to try new methods, e.g., in agriculture. The women are keen and successful traders.

634 There are no facial marks common to the Nupe people as a whole, but sub-
304 tribes are distinguished to some extent. Many sub-tribes have to-day adopted "Bida" marks in addition to their own.

291 Commoners wear a loincloth, with a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder and
565 the blue phrygian cap, said to be the traditional headgear of the Nupe. Nobles and other well-to-do men wear trousers and a flowing white robe and turban.[1]

Birth

843 The rituals surrounding childbirth begin at the time of conception and culminate in the naming ceremony. As soon as the pregnancy becomes noticeable (generally in the third to the fifth month) the parents must discontinue sexual relations and the mother must avoid places inhabited by spirits and abstain from eating certain foods which are thought to have a harmful effect on the unborn child. Special rules or avoidances may be prescribed by the diviner whom the father will consult immedi-
844 ately, and again at the beginning of the confinement and before the naming ceremony. The father keeps away during the actual birth, his elder sister, mother, or other kinswoman assisting the mother, and his father or father's brother cutting the
851 umbilical cord and disposing of the afterbirth, which is buried outside the hut. Thereafter the child's paternal grandfather plays a more important part than the father, announcing the birth of his grandchild and receiving congratulations.

553 The naming ceremony (*suna*) usually takes place eight days after the birth.
852 It is traditionally preceded, on the seventh day, by a libation of beer to the ancestor thought to be reborn in the child. The name used always to be announced by the child's grandfather before a group of relatives, without any particular ceremonial. To-day, however, with the spread of Islam, the announcement is usually made by a mallam. It is at this time also that the child's hair is cut and the tribal marks scratched on the cheeks and forehead.[2]

845 Twins are generally welcomed, but infants born with teeth are regarded as a bad omen.[3]

Circumcision

304 Circumcision (*zuŋ'ba*) is universal, but it does not appear to be regarded as one of the more important rituals. It is performed on boys individually between the ages of 8 and 11, whenever the father thinks fit, by a barber, who is usually paid sixpence or a shilling. Women must be away from the house when it is done, otherwise there is no ceremonial.[4]

No corresponding ceremony is reported for girls.

[1] Nadel, op cit., pp. 25, 237, 362, 405–6 (sketches of tribal marks); Meek, I, 1925, pp. 28–9; Line, 1947.
[2] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 115–18.
[3] Nadel, personal communication; Malam Aliyu Bida, Ms. Notes.
[4] Nadel, op cit., p. 116.

MARRIAGE

582 Marriage among the aristocracy is largely endogamous, i.e., within the ruling
565 class, this " family marriage " as the Nupe call it being characterized by a much lower marriage payment than exogamous marriage. Parallel and cross-cousin marriages are encouraged by Moslem custom, though the former is contrary to the traditional marriage rules, so that the scope of " family marriage " is considerably widened. The practice of polygyny, and the fact that the number of wives indicates wealth and status, leads men of wealth and position to marry outside their social group. In order to keep within the Moslem law of four wives only, further wives are relegated to the position of concubines. Ageing wives of the nobility are divorced and replaced by younger girls.[6]

584 According to Temple,[7] betrothal may be as early as 5–7 years for a girl and 10–12 for a boy, but this is not usual. The marriageable age for girls is usually 16–17, but may be as late as 20. Some of the wealthy Bida families marry off their sons very young to enhance their own prestige.[7]

583 Provision of the marriage payment (*ewó yawó*, " money of marriage ") devolves on the head of the family section which is united in the labour unit (*efakó*).[8] It is made up of a series of payments of varying amounts, each of which has a special name. These are: " greeting," " small thanks," " great thanks," " money for henna," and " money for pots," as well as gifts to the bridesmaids and small annual presents of food to the girl's parents. The payments are usually spread over a period of three to five years. They are now valued as a total sum in money which has fluctuated considerably. In pre-British times it was about £3, but later rose to as high as £20, until, in 1934, the Administration intervened and fixed the upper limit at £7. It is becoming customary for the family head to provide the marriage payment only for the eldest son, younger sons having to contribute part of their own, or even bear the whole cost. It is usual for the bride's father to provide her with a dowry, generally consisting of gifts in kind.[9]

[184] Among the Dibo sub-tribe, according to Temple,[10] girls may be betrothed before birth. The marriage payment is high, but may be paid in farm work. The suitor may, however, be outbid by another and his presents returned before the consummation of the marriage.

588 A form of " woman marriage," similar to that practised by the Yoruba of Kabba Province, is recorded by Temple for the Nupe of Gurara District (Lapai Emirate). Here a rich woman goes through a form of marriage with a girl and allows men to have access to her. Any children born belong to the female " husband."[11]

585 The wedding ceremonial occupies a period of 12 days, divided into three phases of four days each. It begins when the bride, assisted by her young female companions, puts on her dress and veil and receives visitors in her house, the climax being reached on the fourth day when professional musicians and drummers are hired and the bride's father offers food and drink to the guests. Among these will be two envoys of the bridegroom, who will be present at a sacrifice offered by the bride's father to ensure a prosperous marriage blessed with children. Among Moslems a mallam makes a public announcement of the marriage at this stage, which legally establishes the bond. In pagan families, however, the bride is taken to her new home by the bridegroom's envoys, where she is received by her parents-in-law and taken to her newly painted sleeping-hut. The next morning the bridegroom's father performs a sacrifice at which the bride's mother's brother is present,

[6] Nadel, 1942, p. 150.
[7] Temple, 1919, p. 322.
[7] Nadel knew of two such cases where the husbands were still pupils at the Government school.
[8] See above, p. 26.
[9] Nadel, 1942, p. 51.
[10] Temple, 1919, p. 114.
[11] Ibid., p. 324.

585 and after this festivities begin, ending on the ninth day with the segregation of the bride. The last ceremony, on the 12th day, consists of a ritual meal of a cock and hen by the bride and bridegroom and their close relatives, after which the marriage may be consummated.[12]

DIVORCE

586 According to Temple[13] a woman may divorce her husband if he has been convicted of crime, if he fails to maintain her, or deserts her for three years. A man may divorce his wife for adultery but seldom does so, since, as Nadel points out, the economic dependence of many husbands on their wives discourages them from [558 seeking a divorce on these grounds. They also feel that it involves a loss of prestige 837] to appear in the rôle of a wronged husband. Adultery is, indeed, widespread among women of every status, particularly in Bida.[14]

BURIAL

764 According to the traditional ceremonial, burial (*mba*) takes place as soon as possible after death and at any time of day when there is enough light to see by. The grave-diggers (*goro*), who also prepare the body for burial, are sent for immediately death has taken place. The age and kinship position of the deceased determines the place of burial, old men and women, and family heads, being buried under the floor of their sleeping-huts, with a sacrifice performed (by the *goro*) over the grave. Others are buried without ceremony in the space between the huts, by the compound wall, or in a disused, roofless hut. People dying of smallpox are buried in the normal way, except that the body is wrapped in old rags instead of a new [766] cloth. Lepers are buried in the bush. The grave is oblong and shallow, only about 2 ft. below the ground, with a roof of wooden beams covered by a white grass mat, to keep the earth off the corpse. The body is placed on a similar mat, lying on its side, Moslems facing east. A grave is not marked in any way, the earth being carefully levelled, indeed, if burial has been in a sleeping-hut, the hut continues to be used.

765 At the death of chiefs or priests any particular ritual "owned" by them is performed. The full funeral ceremonies consist of three rituals, carried out after 8, 40, and 120 days, bearing the names of these time intervals. The full series is performed only for married men; old men, without surviving widows, do not have the last ritual. In general, children, unmarried young men, and women have only the "eight days."

Mourning must be kept up for eight days, during which relatives of the deceased must not wash, dress their hair, or change their clothes, but men observe this rule for only four days so that they may make preparations for the "eight days" feast. Widows observe mourning until four months after the "eight days" and may not think of re-marriage until then.

764 In Moslem funerals, the *goro* grave-diggers are replaced by mallams, who speak 184 or read prayers in the presence of the men of the house, both before the body is buried and again before the grave is finally closed. The mallams are offered food and money, in payment for their services and as a "pious offering" to be distributed among the other mallams of the town. The subsequent ceremonials have also been made occasions for alms-giving.[15]

[12] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 19–21.
[13] Temple, 1919, pp. 321–3.
[14] Nadel, 1942, pp. 152–3.
[15] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 131–30.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS

General

771 The majority of the Nupe are now Moslems and there is at least one small
162 mosque in every village. The 1931 Census gave 235,990 Moslems out of a total of 324,375 for all religions.[1] But in many communities pagan ritual exists side by side with some Moslem observances, the latter being increasingly adopted for reasons of prestige.

Among the pagans there is common belief in a sky god *Sokó*, who is believed to have created the world and then withdrawn himself from communion with man. The Nupe concept of the cosmos is, according to Nadel, fundamentally amoral. God, having created the world, gave men access to certain mystical forces, making them at the same time subject to these and leaving them to make such use of these "powers" and of the material world as they would and could. First among these mystical forces is *kuti*, the compelling power of ritual, believed to be harnessed in varying degrees in a multiplicity of rites belonging to persons, communities, and associations, and conferring both special benefits or protection and increasing general well-being. At the same time, invocation of the ancestors of kinsfolk, of the people at large, and of the ancient rulers, can afford some measure of benefit or protection. This can also be gained through a separate use of "medicines" which are believed variously to combine pseudo-therapeutic and magical properties. Finally, the evil power of witchcraft, which God also put into the world, has to be discovered, punished, and driven out by special rites. Since, moreover, there are these alternatives with reference to both good fortune and bad, divination has a great part to play in determining the rites to be performed in particular situations.[2]

Spirits

776 The Nupe believe that immaterial beings, existing in their own right and with some human attributes, live in the bush or in hills, trees, watercourses, and other natural features. Their Hausa-Arabic name (*aljenúti*, sing. *aljénu*) suggests that some aspects of this belief may be borrowed from Islam. The spirits may be male or female, friendly or hostile, though only two—*Ndáduma* (Father Niger) and *Ketsá* (associated with a rock in midstream near Jebba Island)—are thought to possess any considerable powers.[3] Another group of spirits is vaguely associated with animals. The least clearly conceived are personal spirits or spirit doubles, which belong to every individual from birth to death and cannot be changed. These may be good or bad.[4]

769 Spirits of the dead (*kuci*) may be reincarnated in their own descendants.
776 Approach to the Supreme Being can be made through ancestral spirits. Special sacrifices are performed either in the house or on the grave of a particular ancestor and the *kuci* are invariably invoked in the ceremonials surrounding birth, marriage, and death. Otherwise it seems that ancestral sacrifices are performed only sporadically and for a specific reason, such as illness in the family.[5]

776 Tsoede, who is regarded by all Nupe as their common ancestor, is venerated in an elaborate cycle of myths and rituals surrounding sacred objects—chains and bronze figures—connected with him.[6] He is, however, outside the general framework of Nupe religious beliefs.

[1] Census of Nigeria, vol. II, p. 63. Unfortunately there are no later figures available for comparison.
[2] See below, pp. 47–8.
[3] See below.
[4] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 28–31.
[5] Ibid., pp. 22–6.
[6] Ibid., pp. 31–2.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

CULTS[7]

794 782 Certain cults and rituals are peculiar to particular Nupe sub-tribes. The Ebe have a *ɨkinta* masked hunting ritual, which is associated with the ancestral spirits and may be performed to remedy sickness or barrenness; the Gbedye have the masked rituals known as *elo* and *mamma*, while the Benu, although professing Islam, perform a *gani* masked ceremony in which many characteristic features of the *gunnu* cult have been incorporated. The Kusopa offer sacrifices to a mythical ancestor of *kola-nut* planting; the Dibo also have an ancestor cult, the rites for which are performed in the now deserted town of Forgwe in Abuja Emirate, where the ancestral graves are. Another form of ancestor cult, *gugu*, derived from the Yoruba *egungun*, is performed at funerals by the Konú of Kutigi town, who were originally Yoruba slaves.

The Kyedye, although now strongly Moslem, and other riverain groups such as the Bataci and the Kakanda, have cults concerned with water and fishing. These include *ndáduma*, in which annual sacrifices are made to the spirits of the river to ensure and limit the annual flood, and *ketsá* in which sacrifices to the spirit of a large rock in mid-stream near Jebba are made to cure illness and bring good fortune in fishing. The chains of Tsoede, which may be used as instruments of ordeal, are also the centre of numerous sacrificial rites. In the Kyedye villages of Giragi and Fofo sacrifices are offered to protect the village from sickness and to bring fertility and prosperity. Usually performed in December at the time of the Niger's second flood, and in February before the start of the fishing season, they are repeated later as a kind of "harvest thanksgiving," when palm-oil and beer are poured over the chain. Each village has a priest whose duty it is to safeguard the chain and make sacrifices to it.

The gunnu cult[8]

794 793 The *gunnu* cult, the most vital religious cult in Nupe, is concerned with fertility, crops, health, and general prosperity. It is performed both on fixed dates and in times of misfortune such as drought, epidemics, failure of crops, etc. It is common to all sections of Nupe, though according to legend it originated among the Beni, but is not necessarily enacted on the same date by all. The date chosen is generally one of three: the fifth month, the beginning of the harvest of early bulrush millet; the ninth month, the beginning of the guinea-corn harvest; or the 13th month, the end of the dry season. Rites are generally performed towards the end of the month, when the moon rises late. There is a *gunnu* priest in each community who is called *ndazó* or *gunnukó*. There are drummers everywhere, but the ritual dress, sacrificial food, and the duration of taboos vary from section to section. The performance is in three parts: the first performed at night by boys and men; the second next morning when there is a sacrifice and communal meal and short dance by the men —this part is secret; the third part consists of a general dance by men and women performed later on the same day.

MEDICINES[9]

278 789 Medicine (*cigbe*) is regarded as an important means of contending with the power of evil, though it may serve both good and evil ends. Rituals or cults are regarded as, in a sense, a delegation of God's power in compensation for his remoteness, and are in the hands of sub-tribes or villages. Medicines, on the other hand, are, except in aberrant form, in the hands of individual practitioners and put to use for individuals.

Nupe medicines are concoctions of roots and other ingredients which may have to be found under particular circumstances or treated in a particular way, used

[7] Nadel, 1942, pp. 23–5; 1940a; Temple, 1919, pp. 113, 331–5; Notes on Kede District, 1950.

[8] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 77–84; see also Nadel, 1937a, for details of the ritual and a study of its significance.

[9] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 17–21, 132–62 and *passim*.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

either with or without specified actions and utterances. Their avowed purposes are frequently therapeutic, but also include defences against theft, witchcraft, and devices to render one invisible. Nupe leech-lore includes both rational empirical cures and mystical rites which can produce no result beyond increasing the confidence of the user. Nor is there any distinction in Nupe vocabulary, for the term *cigbe* is used for all medicines. Medicines may be distinguished as those which are practically effective or may be easily taken as being effective by practitioners, and those whose objective irrationality cannot be mistaken. The latter class may include devices for rendering a man invisible, medicines for killing thieves and fending off witchcraft, and for making hoes do their work in half the normal time.

There are four main types of practitioners of medicine: the guild of Moslem barber-doctors, the pagan order of *cigbeciži*, and two kinds of individual practitioners.

The barber-doctors' guild is recognized by the *Etsu* Nupe but is confined almost entirely to the towns. The guild head occupies an important position at court. They are entirely concerned with therapeutic medicines, but are regarded with contempt in the country districts where people feel that a barber cannot know about such things.

The *cigbeciži*, formerly recognized by the *Etsu*, but since replaced by the barber-doctors, are much more loosely organized than the guild. Whereas the latter keep their knowledge mainly within their lineages, the *cigbeciži* crafts can be bought by anyone. There is little corporate activity beyond occasional gatherings at the local head's house to discuss practice. The head is traditionally responsible for all new medicines. Offerings are made to the spirits of the order and through them to *Sokó*, the ultimate source of *cigbe*, whenever a new medicine is discovered. The names of spirits may also be introduced in the application of medicines, but there appears to be no invocation. With this mystical approach there is a greater sense of the implications of "medicine" for good and for evil. While Moslem barbers, though not concerned with the more "dangerous" medicines, sell without scruple medicines for immoral purposes, such as those to induce barrenness in women, *cigbeciži* claim to be very particular as to whom they sell the more powerful *cigbe*. The powers of witchcraft are often said to require medicines, while the conflict between witchcraft and anti-witchcraft is sometimes represented as a struggle between good and bad *cigbe*.

Individual practitioners are of two kinds: those who provide cures for petty ailments, and Moslem mallams and scholars who write a passage from the Koran which is washed off and drunk by the patient. They also provide amulets containing Koran texts, as elsewhere in Islamic West Africa.

Some medicines, the ingredients of which are not known, belong to descent groups and are kept in vessels into which libations of beer and offerings of blood are poured to the ancestors.

The neophyte to the order of witches as imagined by the Nupe must, it is believed, bathe himself in certain medicines and observe certain taboos, and the masked dancer who impersonates and is possessed by the spirit of the anti-witchcraft society[10] uses certain medicines while others are placed on the mask to give it and its dancer their unique character. There are in addition individual medicines used as defences against magic, and ordeal medicines which will kill the witch who drinks, but leave the innocent unharmed.

Divination[11]

Divination plays an important part in Nupe life and is used not only to determine the rites to be performed in particular situations but to decide such matters as the election of a high officer of state. The two methods used are the old system,

[10] See below.
[11] Nadel, 1942, p. 379; 1954a, pp. 38–67.

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787 widespread in West Africa, based on the patterns made by strings of shells when they are thrown, and a form of Arabic sand pattern divining performed only by Moslem "teachers."

Shell divination (*eba*) is similar in technique to Yoruba *ifa*, and is practised mainly in the villages and pagan districts. The diviner's apparatus consists of the divining strings themselves and a series of marked slabs which serve as a key for interpreting the throws. He receives a small fee—money, rice, or kola-nuts—each time he is consulted, but these payments are regarded as "gifts," and diviners cannot live on what they earn in this way. Most of them are also farmers and some are medicine experts at the same time. The skill is only incidentally hereditary in a family and is generally learned from an expert, payment being made for tuition.

Sand divination (*hati*) is an even more thoroughly learned skill than *eba*, though its performance is less dramatic. The craft can only be acquired by mallams, i.e., men who have at least some rudiments of Moslem learning. The various signs are drawn with the finger-tips on sand smoothed out on the ground. The "key" is carried in the diviner's head, though there is a book on divination written in Arabic which some diviners possess but which they do not consult when actually divining. *Hati* diviners are of widely differing status and learning, but in general the more scholarly mallams do not engage in divination and diviners are often men who have been unsuccessful as mallams.

Witchcraft

754 The Nupe conceive of witchcraft (*ega*) as a supernatural power by which people can be possessed; they then use it for evil and anti-social purposes. It is believed to be practised mainly by women; male witches are said to be "good" people, who would curb the evil desires of the female witches, though the killing of the victim is thought to be the work of both sexes in "partnership."

A witch (*gaci*) is thought to belong to an organization (*ena gaciži*) whose head is known as *lelu*. This title used to be officially bestowed by the Nupe chiefs on a woman who was believed to be the most powerful witch in the village. Her secret knowledge could then be used for the benefit of the community. The equivalent title to-day is that of *sagi*,[12] although a change in the significance of the rank has taken place and the *sagi* is now concerned with more prosaic business.

The powers of a witch are not hereditary but a witch may pass them on to her child by feeding it on witchcraft *cigbe*. A person desiring to become a witch may also approach anyone known to be one and thus gain entry into the circle of witches, or may buy a witchcraft medicine.

Witchcraft is believed capable of making its possessor invisible and of enabling her to recognize other witches; a witch is thought to be fully conscious of her secret powers and does not act against her will. Witches attack people at night when they are asleep and feed on the life force (*rayi*) causing them to fall ill and waste away. Only rarely are they thought to spirit away the body itself.[13]

There are two methods of combating witchcraft. One, applied to individual cases and when a definite person is suspected, consists of an ordeal or other test of guilt, whereupon the witch is heavily fined and expelled from the village. The other is effected through the activities of the *ndakó gboyá*, a "secret" but officially recognized anti-witchcraft society which is applied only when a large-scale outbreak of witchcraft is believed to have occurred. The head of the society (*Majiy Dodo*) comes from a particular lineage of Kusogi Danci, a small riverain village. Initiations take place here, the training lasting five years. Initiates are said to be able to make spirits materialize and to exercise control over witches. Paraphernalia associated with the society include a medicine for ritual washing, a white cloth mask on a pole, and magical objects for producing rain, etc., including the chain of

[12] See above, p. 41.
[13] Nadel, 1935c; 1942, pp. 146–9; 1954a, pp. 163–87.

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754 Tsoede which links the society to the paramount political authority of the country. Some of these become the property of the initiate and are kept in a shrine in his compound, where they become the centre of a general magical cult performed annually.

The society holds a special ceremony in which masked dancers[14] single out alleged witches and take them into the bush for ordeals, where, it is said, victims are killed unless they are able to buy their freedom. The ceremony is never performed in Bida town but produces much social and economic disorganization elsewhere. It is unknown among some groups, such as the Ebe and Dibo. It was formerly controlled by the Fulani Emirs who shared the proceeds with initiates, but this exploitation of the society was ended in 1921, when it was forbidden in what was then Nupe Province. It still functions in Pategi Emirate and in small remote villages in Bida Emirate, where it sometimes takes the form of a spectacular display at festival times. A form of *ndakó gboyá*, under the Hausa name of *magiro*, is found among the Kamberi, Kamuku, Gbari, and other tribes in the north of Niger Province. Among the Gbari, however, it seems to be connected with the cult of the ancestral spirits.[15]

[14] The mask consists of a long tube of white cotton cloth suspended from a wheel-shaped bamboo frame fixed to the top of a pole about 12 feet high; the man representing the spirit stands inside the cloth tube, which comes down to the ground, and holds the pole in his hands. The *ndakó gboyá* masks are unlike any others used in the cults of Nigerian peoples.

[15] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 188–201; Glasson, 1937 (?).

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